

May 1, 2025

Senator Charles E. Grassley
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Grassley,

We write in response to your letter dated March 31, 2025. At the outset, as you are aware, Ju’Riese Colón is no longer serving as the Chief Executive Officer, and the U.S. Center for SafeSport (“the Center”) has initiated a nationwide search for a new CEO. As we look ahead, we will continue to focus on the Center’s core mission of changing sport culture to keep athletes safe from abuse.

We would like to thank you for your continued commitment to safeguarding the nation’s athletes and your continued advocacy for athlete safety. We take the issues that you have raised in your letter seriously, and we share the same commitment of building a sport community where participants can work and learn together free of harm.

Detailed responses to your questions are included below. We also wanted to provide two points of clarification.

First, in your letter, you write about a case in Florida state court where certain allegations were made that the Center had “perpetrated a fraud” against the court. The Board is aware of this matter and appreciates the opportunity to clarify the basis of this matter. The order at issue stems from two underlying county-court criminal proceedings and a related, subsequent, expungement proceeding between a criminal defendant and the State of Florida. The Center was not a party to those proceedings, nor did it receive notice or participate in those proceedings. The order that you are referring was issued following hearings the court held without any notice to the Center and is without a jurisdictional, factual, or legal basis. The Center has filed a Petition for Writ of Certiorari with the Florida Supreme Court on these very grounds.

Additionally, we want to clarify the “increase of \$30 million in funding” mentioned in your letter. As you know, the Empowering Olympic, Paralympic, and Amateur Athletes Act of 2020 mandates a static \$20 million annual payment to fund the Center’s operation. Since the Center opened its doors in 2017, reports of abuse and misconduct have increased by more than 2,500% and, given that this mandate does not account for rising inflation, an exponential increase in reports, nor the addition of new sports and new athletes to our jurisdiction, the Center has called on Congress to amend the Act and increase funding by \$10 million annually, not \$30 million. The Center believes that the increase of \$10 million would further enable us to ensure the safety of our nation’s athletes.

Below are answers to the specific questions posed in your March 31, 2025 letter.

- 1. *How does the Board determine salaries for SafeSport’s executives? Who made the decision to increase the salary for CEO Ju’Riese Colón in 2022 and 2023? Who is currently in charge of determining salaries for officers to include the CEO?***

The Board is ultimately responsible for determining compensation of the CEO, including the compensation of former CEO Ju’Riese Colón. The Center has worked with Willis Towers Watson and Quatt Associates to evaluate CEO compensation to align with industry standards of non-profits and those in similar industries. The Board does not set salaries for other executives, and all staff salaries outside of the CEO are based on a compensation structure developed by a third-party consultant, hrQ, to align with market and industry standards.

- 2. *In the 2023 financial documents, there is an entry for a board designated “operating reserve.”***
(a) *What is the operating reserve?*
(b) *Why was this sum transferred to this account and for what precise purposes?*

The Center’s operating reserve is a designated fund set aside to cover operating expenses. The Board made the strategic decision to grow the Center’s operating reserve to cover six months of operating expenses. This decision was embedded in the past two strategic plans and based on non-profit best practices. Usage of the operating reserve must be directed and approved by the Board. Demand for the Center’s services and resources continues to grow every year. Over the next several years, reserve funds will be used to support the continuing rise of reports, along with the expected rise of new sports and participants anticipated to fall within the Center’s jurisdiction.

- 3. *In the 2023 federal tax return, SafeSport listed 128 employees. How many employees does SafeSport current have? How many employees work remotely? How many employees report to the main office in Denver? How many employees report to another designated office space? How is oversight conducted over the activities of employees who work remotely?***

As of April 30, 2025, the Center has 129 active employees, all of whom have the option to work remotely. Approximately half of our employees are in the Denver metro area and have the option of reporting to the Center’s designated office in Denver. There are no other designated office spaces. All Center employees, including those that work remotely, are expected to keep their teams apprised of their projects and activities, including tracking time spent. In addition, managers conduct regular check-ins with their teams and employees are evaluated annually.

- 4. *How many investigators are employed by SafeSport? Ms. Colón testified on March 20, 2024 before the Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety and Data Security that about***

half of the 130 employees relate to investigations and about 35 are investigators.¹ Is that accurate?

These numbers fluctuate based on new hires, departures, and transfers to other positions internally. As of April 30, 2025, there are 129 active employees, 69 of which work in Response and Resolution, the primary team responsible for receiving, investigating, and resolving allegations of abuse and misconduct in sport. There are currently 31 investigators that are part of Response and Resolution, which is also made up of the intake, resolutions, and legal teams.

5. Please provide the internal policy manuals to include conflict of interest policy as provided by the 6th Amended Bylaws (revised Jan 1, 2024) Art. VI, ¶ 6.5 and how reports are handled and prioritized.

Article VI, Section 6.5 provides that “[t]he Board of Directors shall adopt and maintain a separate conflict of interest policy at all times.” This policy is attached to this letter at Appendix A.

6. What types of legal matters did the Denver-based law firm handle for SafeSport that amounted to over \$1 million in payments? What was the nature of the legal work they handled?

Zonies Law, the Denver-based law firm that you reference, has deep institutional knowledge of the Center and its processes and has served the Center in three main capacities. First, Zonies Law has presented the Center’s position in merits arbitrations, which are effectively one-to-four day trials before an independent arbitrator and require the work of an experienced trial lawyer. In 2023, approximately 70-75% of Zonies Law’s billing was related to litigating over 20 such arbitrations. Starting in 2024, as the Center was able to increase its legal staff, the Center began using its staff attorneys in this role. Based on internalizing the work with the Center’s own legal staff, Zonies Law’s work and billing on arbitrations has been significantly reduced.

Second, in 2023, Zonies Law provided general legal advice on various matters, including in the Center’s response and resolution, administrative, compliance, and education and outreach functions.

Third, Zonies Law is primary counsel for the Center on state and federal court litigations across the country. In 2023, Zonies Law provided legal services on eight separate matters, including arbitration appeals and civil suits.

¹ Promoting a Safe Environment in U.S. Athletics: Hearing before the Subcomm. on Consumer Prot., Prod. Safety, & Data Sec. of the S. Comm. on Com., Sci. & Transp., 118th Cong. (2024), <https://www.commerce.senate.gov/2024/3/promoting-a-safe-environment-in-u-s-athletics>.

7. *What oversight is provided by the Board over payments of administrative costs and fees such as bank and credit card fees? What review is done to ensure that the organization is not overcharged for items?*

The Center has an established approval matrix for spending. This matrix dictates who must review and approve expenditures based on the amount of the expenditure. This system enables review to ensure that expenditures are appropriate and reasonable. The matrix is attached to this letter at Appendix B.

8. *What is SafeSport's travel policy for its employees with regard to mode of travels, hotels chosen and expenses incurred?*

SafeSport has a dedicated Travel, Meeting, and Expense Policy designed to reimburse staff for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in connection with approved travel on behalf of the organization. The comprehensive travel policy is attached to this letter at Appendix C. As an organization with national jurisdiction, travel is critical to executing the Center's mission, including but not limited to traveling to national governing board-sanctioned events nationwide to audit the consistent application of safety policy, conducting in-person investigation interviews, attending and conducting live trainings, and bringing team members together for in person meetings when necessary.

* * *

As always, we welcome a meeting with you or your staff to discuss any additional questions you might have.

Sincerely,

/s/ Julie Fabsik-Swarts

Julie Fabsik-Swarts

Lead Independent Director

U.S. Center for SafeSport Board of Directors

/s/ April Holmes

April Holmes

Interim Chief Executive Officer

U.S. Center for SafeSport