



## MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER

Donald P. Garber

*Commissioner*

September 12, 2014

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Committee on the Judiciary  
2138 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-6216

Dear Honorable Members of the Committee on the Judiciary:

We are pleased to respond to your request for additional information regarding MLS' policies regarding domestic violence. MLS recognizes the unique role sports play in society and the influence that major professional sports leagues and their athletes have in shaping public perception regarding important social issues. As a result, we hold our owners, executives, staff, coaches and players to the highest standards of personal conduct and have a zero-tolerance policy for unacceptable behavior such as racism, homophobia and domestic violence.

MLS has a multifaceted approach to the management of these issues which includes education, discipline and treatment.

1. Education/Resources

MLS has an intensive Substance Abuse and Behavioral Health Program ("SABH Program") which is overseen by addiction and behavioral health experts. As part of this SABH Program, all of our players participate in a pre-season training that provides education on a wide variety of key issues including domestic violence. This mandatory training program is administered by the SABH Program professionals, as well as a Human Resources training consultant who focuses on sexual harassment awareness and prevention, diversity awareness and conflict resolution. As it relates to domestic violence, the topic is addressed through two different presentations: (i) a human resources presentation that encourages players to use common sense to avoid at risk situations, and (ii) a clinical presentation that informs players how to manage high-conflict situations with family members and/or significant others.

In addition to the education component, the SABH Program professionals are available 24/7 to address any questions or concerns related to family and relationship issues. Importantly, this resource is available to and used by both players and their immediate families on a confidential basis.

2. Discipline

Under the terms of our Collective Bargaining Agreement and our League governing documents, the Commissioner's Office has the authority to impose discipline for off-field misconduct that we determine is detrimental to the public image or reputation of the League – this includes domestic violence. The type of disciplinary action can range from monetary fines to the termination of a player's contract or the suspension of any owner or staff member from involvement in the League or its Clubs. We have been clear that we have zero-tolerance for domestic violence and, as we have demonstrated in the past regarding other issues such as racism and homophobia, would levy strong discipline.

3. Treatment

The SABH Program makes treatment available for any behavioral health issue for players and their immediate families under the guidance of the SABH Program professionals. Treatment is provided on either an in-patient or out-patient basis, as necessary, through a network of first class facilities and doctors. If recommended by the SABH Program doctors, the League has the ability to mandate treatment by players. The League bears the expense for treatment.

I believe this approach has provided us with a very effective way to meet our goals of holding all members of the MLS family to the highest standards of personal conduct. In particular, I am very proud of our players and their history of, and commitment to, serving as great examples for our fans.

Please let me know if you would like to discuss further or require any additional information.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Garber", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Don Garber