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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 7, 2014

Mr. Sunil Gulati
President
United States Soccer Federation
1801 South Prairie Ave.
Chicago, IL 60616

Dear Mr. Gulati:

We write to express our concerns over reports that the 2015 Women's World Cup will be held on artificial turf. As you know, in contrast, the men's competition is held entirely on grass. We ask that the U.S. Soccer Federation use its influence to urge the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) to reconsider this short-sighted and counterproductive decision. We also ask that the U.S. Soccer Federation make every effort to ensure that players who express concerns about this situation are not retaliated against.

The United States women's national soccer team – ranked number 1 in the world – has time and again made our nation proud. Their skill, grace, and resolve has inspired a generation of women to take up soccer. In fact, according to the US Youth Soccer organization, more than 1.5 million girls play organized soccer.

Our women's national team has earned our nation's respect and admiration. And they deserve to be treated with the respect that their skill and performance have earned.

Artificial turf both increases the risk of serious injury and fundamentally changes the way the game is played. FIFA recognized artificial turf's inferiority in an article titled, "How bad are the artificial turf pitches?" in a March edition of its weekly magazine. The article states that artificial turf is "widely regarded as deeply problematic."

Male players routinely refuse to play on turf fields, and FIFA has already committed to using natural grass for the 2018 men's tournament in Russia and 2022 men's tournament in Qatar, host countries with climates at least as challenging as Canada's. When FIFA polled top female soccer players around the world, 77% agreed that all matches at major tournaments should be played on natural grass, while a mere 8% disagreed.

Viewership and interest in women's soccer has never been higher. The 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup Final gave ESPN its highest U.S. ratings ever for a soccer match at the time, drawing 13.5 million viewers in the U.S. And in 2015, the world will again be watching the Women's World Cup with great interest.

The United States women's national soccer team deserves to be treated fairly and equally by FIFA. We urge you in your capacity as a member of FIFA's Executive Committee and President of the United States Soccer Federation to support these players by urging FIFA to use grass field for the 2015 Women's World Cup and by making sure the players are not retaliated against.

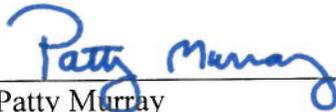
Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator



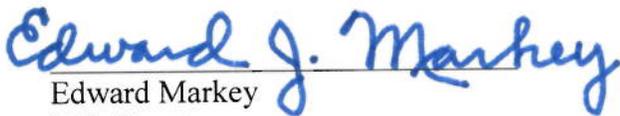
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U.S. Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senator



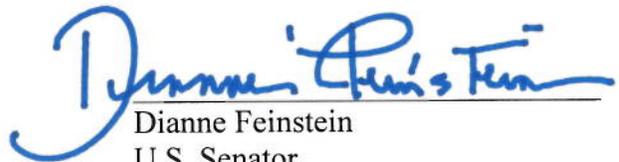
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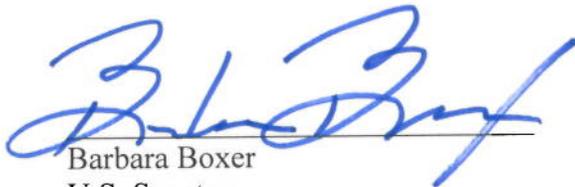
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