

June 29, 2022

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland:

We write today to request that the Department of Justice make a concerted effort to fight illegal offshore sports books. These predatory operations expose our constituents to financial and cyber vulnerabilities; do not have protocols to address money laundering, sports integrity, or age restrictions; and undermine states' efforts to capture much needed tax revenue through legal sports betting channels.

While sports betting was largely illegal for the last several decades, now 35 states and the District of Colombia allow regulated sports betting. Over 157 million Americans have, or soon will have, access to legal channels to place their bets, with millions more in proximity to a neighboring state where they can wager legally.

As this nascent legal market continues to expand, we cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that the illegal market is thriving and operating unfettered. These offshore operations, including Bovada, MyBookie and BetOnline, have developed sophisticated platforms that are nearly indistinguishable from those of legal providers. These illegal operations also offer generous promotions and favorable odds to entice U.S. customers and are frequently cited in reputable sports media channels. Internet searches nationwide for offshore sportsbooks increased by almost 40 percent in 2021, outpacing searches for legal ones, with Bovada constituting half of all sportsbook brand searches. These dangerous operators are not relegated to the dark web, but instead are easily accessed through any computer or smart phone. This creates confusion for many consumers who may not even know they are wagering illegally.

Moreover, the protections Americans have learned to expect from legal regulated sportsbooks, like responsible gaming functions, secured personal and financial information, and identity verification, are non-existent. The illegal operators are not interested in helping bettors wager responsibly by providing checks like time limits, budgets, or self-exclusion. They do not adhere to federal or state financial regulations, so consumers can never be sure if their information is secure or if they will receive their winnings. These operators are not bound by age restrictions, meaning children and young adults can be exploited by these websites. Finally, these illegal operators do not help promote the integrity of sporting contests by sharing with sports leagues information related to unusual betting patterns or insider betting, as many regulated sports books do.

We ask that the Justice Department work with the gaming industry, sports leagues, and other stakeholders to identify the worst actors, investigate and prosecute them, and educate Americans on the dangers associated with illegally wagering on sports. We also request that the Department

provide a response by September 6, 2022, outlining any additional tools from Congress that can facilitate federal law enforcement action and ensure prosecutorial support is dedicated to disrupting and dismantling these criminal organizations.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Federal law enforcement has an important role to play in protecting Americans from unchecked illegal activity, and we look forward to working with the Department to help eliminate the threats posed by illegal operators.

Sincerely,



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Guy Reschenthaler
Member of Congress



Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



C. A. Dutch Ruppersberger
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Mark E. Amodei
Member of Congress



David J. Trone
Member of Congress



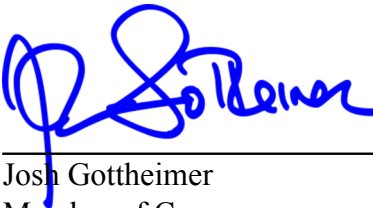
John Joyce, M.D.
Member of Congress



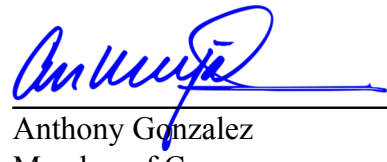
Jefferson Van Drew
Member of Congress



Susie Lee
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



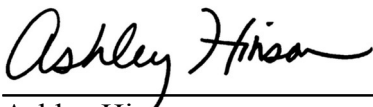
Anthony Gonzalez
Member of Congress



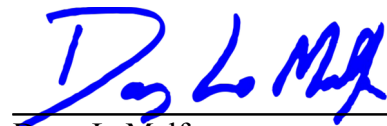
Colin Z. Allred
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Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress



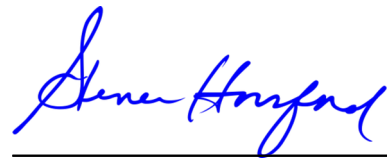
Ashley Hinson
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Lloyd Doggett
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Mike Kelly
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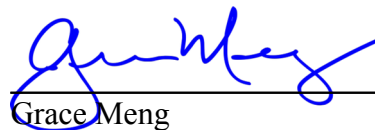
Fred Keller
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Grace Meng
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Ben Cline
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Pete Aguilar
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