



June 3, 2026

Adam Silver
Commissioner, the NBA
645 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear Commissioner Silver,

With the arrival of the NBA finals and the great excitement and interest across the country and the world that it brings, we are writing to ask for your consideration and collaboration on a darker side of major sporting events that you are in a pivotal position to address.

In 2014, you wrote in your [New York Times op-ed](#) that legalized sports betting was "inevitable" and should be brought "out of the underground and into the sunlight where it can be appropriately monitored and regulated."

More than a decade later, we are deeply concerned that the integration of gambling into professional basketball, other major sports, and sports media has expanded to the point where existing regulations are ineffective and outdated, and where online sports betting has become normalized—even for our youth. And, as the largest children's advocacy organization in the country dedicated to protecting and preparing kids and teens in a world dominated by technology, we approach the issue of online sports gambling with a special concern about how it negatively affects young boys and teens.

We especially want to draw your attention to alarming research showing that online gambling is rapidly becoming normalized among boys in America, especially through sports culture, social media, and digital platforms, and that this trend is increasingly eroding trust in sports themselves.

In January, [Common Sense Media](#) released [national research](#) finding that 36% of boys age 11 to 17 reported gambling in the past year, while nearly half (49%) of 17-year-old boys currently gamble. The same survey found that gambling advertising is pervasive in the spaces where young people spend their time: 61% of boys reported seeing gambling advertisements on YouTube, 60% on social media platforms, and 57% during sports broadcasts on networks including ESPN, TNT, ABC, and other NBA media partners. Nearly 60% of respondents said they encountered online gambling without searching for it.

Additionally, reporting from the [Washington Post](#) underscores how pervasive gambling content has become throughout the sports viewing experience. In an AI-assisted analysis of 50 hours of televised sports programming, including NBA broadcasts, from December 2025 to January 2026, the *Post* found that gambling references, promotions, or advertisements appeared on average every four minutes. Across the broadcasts analyzed, more than one in four minutes contained at

least one gambling-related reference. When it comes to NBA broadcasts in particular, references to gambling appeared, on average, once every three minutes and were often deeply integrated into the game commentary itself. The *Post* found that during a January ESPN broadcast, for example, one commentator discussed a wager on a player scoring at least 30 points before another immediately promoted a DraftKings betting code.

The sports betting industry has simultaneously experienced explosive growth. Again, according to the *Post*, sportsbooks accepted nearly \$200 billion in wagers last year—roughly fifteen times more than in 2019. Meanwhile, public concern is growing, particularly around the saturation of gambling advertising during live sports broadcasts and its impact on young viewers.

U.S. senators from the Senate Commerce Consumer Protection Subcommittee [recently raised serious concerns](#) with sports betting and prediction market executives about predatory marketing tactics and the cheating scandals that have called the integrity of professional sports into question. And last month, U.S. Senators Britt and Blumenthal [introduced legislation](#) aimed at shielding young people from targeted gambling advertising on the internet.

In New York, meanwhile, Gov. Kathy Hochul has directed the NY State Gaming Commission to draft comprehensive safeguards to prevent those who are under 21 from gambling in New York. And legislation is under consideration in New York and California to ensure that underage youth are not targeted by advertising for sports betting or other online gambling opportunities. Further, the [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) just reported on several steps lawmakers in Pennsylvania and New Jersey are taking as a result of the growth of online gambling.

What is missing, however, is leadership from the people who can make a difference right now to better protect kids and teens from the harsh effects of gambling online.

We are appealing to you directly, first, because you are a father and, second, because the NBA is among the most influential cultural institutions in the world, especially for boys and young men. NBA players, broadcasts, social media channels, and digital products shape youth culture far beyond the court. As one of the most prominent leaders in modern sports, your decisions carry enormous influence over how gambling is normalized for kids who are not old enough to vote, buy cigarettes or alcohol, and, in some cases, not even old enough to drive.

Regrettably, the prevalence of gambling throughout basketball culture is now nearly unavoidable. Whether watching games on television or streaming platforms, engaging with NBA content online, checking statistics, or interacting on social media, young fans are routinely and intentionally exposed to betting odds, sportsbook integrations, gambling commentary, and wagering promotions.

As you know, the brains of kids and teens are still developing. As such, they do not have well-formed core capacities in impulse control, emotional regulation, and risk assessment. Add to

that an ongoing youth mental health crisis, with direct connections to increased use of online devices powered by addictive algorithmic feeds, and we do not believe that someone in your position can ignore how deeply sports wagering has become embedded into the fan experience and the consequences that poses to young people, and especially to boys.

The NBA has been at the forefront of this negative transformation. The league was among the earliest major professional sports organizations to publicly support legalized sports betting, and has since expanded partnerships with sportsbooks, betting operators, and gambling-related media integrations across broadcasts, digital platforms, league partnerships, and team sponsorships. Other leagues have followed suit, further blurring the distinction between being a sports fan and being a sports bettor. The combination of the power of the NBA and the power of online advertising and social media is overwhelming for parents and their children.

For more than 20 years, Common Sense Media has worked directly on issues involving children, media, technology, and public health. Today, on behalf of parents, educators, pediatricians, and policymakers across the country, we are asking the NBA to take a leadership role in reducing kids' exposure to online gambling.

Specifically, we welcome responses to the following questions that we believe address several of the core problems that the newly boosted relationship between professional sports and online gambling have created:

1. **Digital Access and Age Gating:** What age verification systems are in place on NBA Fantasy platforms, given that minors participate while these platforms now heavily integrate gambling content and odds? Does the NBA require age verification before allowing users to access betting lines, prop bets, or gambling odds integrated into game statistics on NBA.com and the NBA app?
2. **In-Stadium Protections:** What policies govern the placement of gambling kiosks, sportsbook lounges, or gambling-related advertising inside NBA arenas? Are there protections to ensure separation from family sections, youth programming areas, or kid-focused spaces?
3. **Broadcast and Streaming Safeguards:** During daytime broadcasts and other high-youth-viewership programming, are there restrictions on the frequency, placement, or content of gambling advertisements? What standards does the NBA use to determine whether gambling advertising is age-appropriate, and who is responsible for enforcing those standards?
4. **Data Collection and Minors:** What safeguards prevent gambling partners from collecting data on users under 18 through NBA-owned platforms, apps, or websites? Does the NBA independently audit its gambling partners to ensure they are not marketing to minors or using youth engagement data for advertising purposes?
5. **Parental Controls and Consumer Transparency:** What parental control tools are available across NBA digital products and partner platforms to limit or block gambling-related



content for minors? Does the NBA provide parents with clear, accessible guidance on how to shield children from gambling content while still allowing them to enjoy NBA games and programming?

If boys are entering the sports betting pipeline as early as age 11, professional sports leagues cannot credibly claim to be bystanders to the problem. All parents and the American public deserve transparency regarding how gambling partnerships are structured, what safeguards exist, and what accountability measures are in place to protect children and teens.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these issues constructively and collaboratively, with the goal that the 2026–2027 season does not roll out even more gambling-related content for young viewers as it did this past season. And we stand ready to work with the NBA toward meaningful solutions that protect young fans and preserve the integrity of the great game of basketball.

Respectfully,

Jim Steyer
Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Common Sense Media