



**UNITED STATES
OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE**

Statement of

Nicole Deal

**Chief of Security and Athlete Services
United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee**

**Hearing before the United States House Committee on Energy and Commerce,
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations:**

“Timeout: Evaluating Safety Measures Implemented to Protect Athletes.”

March 21, 2024

Chairman Griffith, Ranking Member Castor, and esteemed members of the Subcommittee, I am Nicole Deal, Chief of Security and Athlete Services for the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC). I am grateful for this opportunity to discuss the critical issue of athlete safety, a matter that is of paramount importance to our organization and to which the Center for SafeSport contributes significantly.

In my position, I manage safety and security operations at the USOPC, oversee athlete welfare, and work towards enriching resources for Team USA athletes beyond their sports endeavors. I act as a link between the USOPC and the Center for SafeSport, and as a guide to National Governing Bodies (NGBs) on matters of athletes' safety needs and concerns.

Our guiding principle at the USOPC is the safety and well-being of Team USA athletes. Our mission transcends the pursuit of gold medals and world records, aiming to ensure all athletes can train, compete, and excel in an environment free from abuse or misconduct. This commitment informs our every decision and action.

The USOPC today is markedly different from who we were in 2017. We have evolved significantly, learning from our past and making comprehensive improvements. The transformation extends beyond compliance and governance changes to a shift in culture, where athlete safety is an inherent value shaping our policies, procedures, and interactions.

We updated our mission statement to emphasize the well-being and competitive excellence of Team USA athletes, underscoring our commitment to their safety. We have reinforced our Athlete Safety Policy through stringent training and reporting requirements for all members of our organization and processes for thorough investigation and resolution of complaints.

We have adopted stricter policies concerning interactions between minor athletes and adults, implemented new background check protocols, and launched an Integrity Platform. This



**UNITED STATES
OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE**

platform facilitates easy, confidential, and safe reporting of compliance issues, ensuring all concerns are addressed.

We aim to foster an environment where safety is the norm. We provide role-specific safety training for all staff interacting directly with athletes, an effort amplified by our collaboration with field experts who provide enhanced training.

We have established robust anti-retaliation policies to protect individuals who report allegations, a vital part of our commitment to transparency and accountability, and a testament to our determination to foster an environment where everyone feels comfortable reporting concerns without fear of reprisal.

We believe in the Center for SafeSport's unique mission and capabilities to promote athlete safety, supporting it with an annual contribution of \$17.4 million and affirming its independence annually via a GAO certification process.

We recognize the importance of continuous improvement. Our Athlete Listening Survey since 2020 shows a 113% increase in athletes reporting that they know how to report allegations of sexual misconduct, a testament to our efforts to cultivate an environment where everyone feels seen, heard, and comfortable reporting concerns.

In the realm of NGB compliance, the USOPC holds a unique role. While we are responsible for the oversight of the NGBs regarding SafeSport compliance, we also serve as the national governing body for 10 Olympic and Paralympic sports and are held to those exact same standards. This dual role provides us with profound insight into the diverse needs and challenges specific to each NGB, especially in relation to Athlete Safety.

Recognizing the unique challenges each NGB faces, we share a common goal: to transform the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic athlete safety system into a paragon of trust and excellence in abuse prevention and response within sports. This requires the Center to undertake key reforms in its current operations. These include enhancing the athlete's experience so that the Center becomes a trusted partner, refining the response and resolution process for greater transparency and communication to boost its effectiveness, and showcasing an eagerness to learn and adapt through receptiveness to feedback and agility in implementing change.

In partnership with the NGBs, we are dedicated to crafting solutions that hold perpetrators accountable and position us as a trusted support for survivors.

In conclusion, our commitment to athlete safety and wellness is steadfast. It is the cornerstone of our organization. We pledge to all Team USA athletes, past, present, and future, that we are unwavering in our mission to ensure their safety and wellness. We appreciate your partnership



**UNITED STATES
OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE**

in making this a reality, and I stand ready to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for this opportunity.