





May 25, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy Speaker U.S. House of Representatives Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries Minority Leader U.S. House of Representatives Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer Majority Leader United States Senate Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell Minority Leader United States Senate Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker McCarthy, Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader Jeffries, and Minority Leader McConnell:

We write to express our strong support for the Safeguarding the Homeland from the Threats Posed by Unmanned Aircraft Systems Act of 2023, bipartisan legislation introduced by Senator Peters (MI), Senator Johnson (WI), Senator Sinema (AZ), and Senator Hoeven (ND), which would extend and expand critical counter-drone authorities that Congress enacted in the Preventing Emerging Threats Act of 2018 and most recently extended in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023. These important counter-drone authorities need to be renewed and expanded so that law enforcement authorities can have the tools necessary to protect our fans and your constituents. Once enacted, these narrowly tailored counter-UAS provisions will play an important role in helping to protect critical infrastructure and to ensure the safety of major sporting events, including the safety of the millions of American fans who attend these events each year.

Our organizations collectively host thousands of events for millions of fans each year. These large-scale sporting events occur in open-air stadiums, arenas, racetracks, and other venues at which unauthorized drone incursions are far too common, notwithstanding the a longstanding restriction that prohibits all non-authorized aircraft from flying over active largescale sporting events, which the FAA put in place following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and Congress later strengthened and codified. Despite this flight restriction, drone incursions at sporting events and other mass gatherings have been occurring for years—and they are increasing in frequency.

The unauthorized use of drones (whether malicious or otherwise) presents a significant and rising threat to all large gatherings of people, including major sporting events. The NFL

hosts 272 regular season football games each season, held in 30 stadiums across the country, plus additional games in the postseason. At these events, the NFL seeks to protect the over 17 million fans who attend NFL games each year as well as the 2,000 professional players and the hundreds of coaches and other staff associated with the NFL's 32 member clubs. MLB hosts 2,430 baseball games each season (plus additional games in the postseason), held in 30 stadiums

2,450 baseball games each season (plus additional games in the postseason), neid in 50 stadiums across the United States and Canada. At these events, MLB seeks to protect the approximately 70 million fans who attend MLB games each year, as well as thousands of players, coaches, and other staff who are also present at those venues. Each year, NASCAR sanctions approximately 1,200 events in more than 30 U.S. states, as well as Canada, Mexico, and Europe. The NCAA and its member institutions must protect more than 40 million fans during Division I regular season and championship football games each year.

Security at these events is provided by a multilayered system that includes the sports organizations' security officials; individual team security professionals; owners and operators of stadiums and other venues; local and state law enforcement officials; and, at times and where resources permit, federal authorities. Although federal authorities can and do contribute to the safety of some mass gatherings like sporting events, it is simply impossible for federal officials to provide counter-drone capabilities at all of the thousands of sporting events conducted by our organizations. State and local law enforcement officials are therefore primarily responsible for security at our events, including addressing the safety threats posed by unauthorized operations of drones.

For that reason, the sports organizations have long supported efforts to provide authority to state and local law enforcement to implement counter-UAS detection and mitigation capabilities. Importantly, the *Safeguarding the Homeland from the Threats Posed by Unmanned Aircraft Systems Act of 2023* expands detection authority and implements a pilot program extending counter-drone authority, under appropriate oversight and training, to certain state and local law enforcement officials involved in protecting mass gatherings at sporting events. This pilot program would take an important step toward providing state and local law enforcement with the tools necessary to combat threats posed by the unauthorized uses of drones.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with federal, state, and local government stakeholders to ensure that drones are integrated into the national airspace system in a manner which protects the safety of the millions of fans, participants, and others who attend our events every year. Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We urge you to quickly pass this legislation, which will more effectively protect the homeland from a serious and growing security threat.

Sincerely,

National Football League Major League Baseball National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing National Collegiate Athletic Association