

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

August 10, 2026

The Honorable Robert D. Manfred
Commissioner
Major League Baseball
1271 Avenue of the Americas, New York

The Honorable Bruce Meyer
Interim Executive Director
Major League Baseball Players Association
1325 Avenue of the Americas, New York

Dear Commissioner Manfred and Executive Director Meyer:

We write in light of recent reporting that a personalized greeting from Philadelphia Phillies star Bryce Harper was used to target an admitted gambling addict to encourage continued betting.¹ **We write to demand an end to the MLB and MLBPA policies that enabled this type of predatory promotion.**

In late 2024, Terry Thompson, who was already experiencing severe financial distress due to his gambling addiction, received a video in which Mr. Harper wished him an “extra special Thanksgiving” and referenced his son. This video was prepared at the request of Thompson’s VIP manager at FanDuel and intended to entice further gambling. As a FanDuel customer, Mr. Thompson ultimately wagered \$18.5 million and lost over \$1.5 million through the platform, taking out several mortgages on his home and selling shares of his business to fund his addiction.

VIP programs are dangerously designed to distract bettors, including those struggling with a gambling addiction, from their financial losses and entice further destructive gambling – especially when they are attempting to quit. The very nature of VIP programs is to develop “close” relationships with their clients over time, fostering false friendships and frequently asking about bettors’ personal lives to make them more willing to place bets. Gambling is a known addictive product and VIP/host relationships are designed to keep people actively engaged and at greater risk. Moreover, the virtual nature of online sports betting makes it so that VIP managers are able to access bettors more frequently and at any time of the day, making bettors much more susceptible to manipulative marketing tactics.

¹ David Gambacorta, “FanDuel Sent a Personal Message from Phillies Star Bryce Harper to a Customer with a Gambling Addiction,” Inquirer.com (The Philadelphia Inquirer, July 9, 2026), <https://www.inquirer.com/news/philadelphia/bryce-harper-fanduel-vip-video-gambling-addiction-20260709.html>.

Mr. Harper has stated he was unaware of the true purpose of the video and would not have participated had he known.² This incident, however, raises broader concerns that players are not prohibited from such endorsements and highlights a systemic failure rooted in the deep enmeshment between leagues, teams, and sports books. In fact, MLB rules currently allow players to enter endorsement deals with sportsbooks so long as they do not encourage betting on baseball. Partnerships that do not violate this rule can even use personalized content from players to drive vulnerable fans into debt and addiction.³ This is a failure that Major League Baseball (MLB) and the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA) must confront directly, especially as both are in the midst of renegotiating their collective bargaining agreement.

Despite clear harms that VIP programs pose to bettors, MLB and MLBPA continue to disregard fan safety by permitting partnerships with sportsbooks operating these programs. We demand an immediate end to this policy. MLB and the MLBPA must not allow players, regardless of their level of awareness, to legitimize sportsbook VIP programs designed to exploit the most vulnerable fans. I also request that you provide answers to the following questions no later than **August 24, 2026**:

1. As MLB and MLBPA renegotiate their collective bargaining agreement, what is your current position on allowing MLB players to seek endorsements and partnerships from sportsbooks? Note: The MLBPA has publicly announced their intention to seek greater freedom for players to have relationships with gambling companies.
2. How will MLB and the MLBPA guarantee that fan safety and well-being take precedence over revenue from gambling partnerships?
3. Do you believe MLB and MLBPA policies on sportsbook endorsements and partnerships are adequate to prevent engagement with predatory VIP programs?
4. Will the MLB and MLBPA undertake any player education to ensure that players understand the risks their participation in sportsbook promotions poses to fans?
5. Will the MLB and MLBPA prohibit players from participating in personalized marketing campaigns by sportsbooks as part of VIP or tier programs?

² Stephen J Nesbitt, "Bryce Harper Addresses Cameo Video Sent by FanDuel to Gambler: 'I Did Not Consent to It'," *The New York Times*, July 13, 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/7442814/2026/07/13/bryce-harper-fanduel-cameo-gambling-video/>.

³ Major League Baseball, "MLB Conduct Policies," *MLB.Com*, accessed July 28, 2026, <https://www.mlb.com/player-resource-center/player-policies>.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Valerie P. Foushee
Member of Congress