

TESTIMONY OF ROGER GOODELL
Commissioner, National Football League
Before the Committee on Oversight and Reform of the House of Representatives
June 22, 2022

Good morning Chairwoman Maloney, Ranking Member Comer and Members of the Committee. I am Roger Goodell, Commissioner of the National Football League and I am here today to discuss the NFL's efforts to promote safe and respectful workplaces, including at the Washington Commanders.

The Commanders are one of 32 NFL clubs, each of which is managed by its ownership and executives and have their own workplaces and policies. Two years ago, the Commanders asked me to recommend independent counsel to address workplace issues and recommend changes to improve the workplace culture. We identified several candidates, and the club selected Beth Wilkinson, a distinguished former federal prosecutor. Approximately six weeks later, the club asked my office to assume oversight of the Wilkinson firm's work. The Wilkinson firm conducted a comprehensive review of the workplace at the club, interviewing more than 150 witnesses. As a result, we gained a clear understanding of what the workplace had been at the Commanders, how it had begun to change, and what further steps were needed to support our ultimate goal of transforming that workplace to one that is safe and productive for all of its employees.

Let me start by expressing my gratitude to the men and women who shared their experiences during the investigation, and to Beth Wilkinson and her team, who did their work with the highest degree of integrity and professionalism. It required substantial courage for many to relive their painful experiences and tell their individual stories. No one should experience workplaces like the one they described, especially not in the National Football League. I can say to every victim unequivocally that their willingness to come forward has contributed to a substantially improved workplace.

It is clear to me that the workplace in Washington was unprofessional and unacceptable in numerous respects: bullying, widespread disrespect toward colleagues, use of demeaning language, public embarrassment, and harassment. Moreover, for a prolonged period of time the Commanders had a woefully deficient HR function, particularly with respect to reporting practices and recordkeeping. As a result, we imposed unprecedented discipline on the club – monetary penalties of well over \$10 million, and requirements that the club implement a series of recommendations and allow an outside firm to conduct regular reviews of their workplace. In addition, for the past year, Daniel Snyder has not attended League or committee meetings, and to the best of my knowledge, has not been involved in day-to-day operations at the Commanders. The cheerleader program has been entirely revamped and is now a co-ed dance team under new leadership. And the most recent independent workplace report, which we have shared with the Committee, confirms that an entirely new, highly skilled, and diverse management team is in place and that there has been a “substantial transformation of [the team’s] culture, leadership, and Human Resources practices.” To be clear – the workplace at the Commanders today bears no resemblance to the workplace that has been described to this committee.

We did not receive a written report of Ms. Wilkinson’s findings for compelling reasons that continue to this day. A critical element of any workplace review is broad participation by both current and former employees. Encouraging employees to come forward and share their experiences, which were frequently painful and emotional was essential to identifying both the organization’s failures and how to fix them. To encourage this participation, Ms. Wilkinson promised confidentiality to any current or former employee. For this reason, shortly after we assumed oversight of Ms. Wilkinson’s work, we determined that a comprehensive oral briefing would best allow us to receive the information necessary both to evaluate the workplace as it was, and to ensure that the team put in place the policies and processes to reform that workplace – all while preserving the confidentiality of those who participated in the investigation. Oral reports are often used by the NFL and other organizations in conducting internal investigations and for other issues. If appropriate, we will make public a summary of the key findings, as we did here. We have been open and direct about the fact that the workplace culture at the Commanders was not only unprofessional, but toxic for far too long.

I am aware that some victims, including those who appeared before this Committee, each of whom was invited to participate in Beth Wilkinson's investigation, have chosen to share their experiences publicly and I fully respect that choice. Many others made a different choice and it is my responsibility to honor the commitment to protect their confidentiality. I am confident that should there be another investigation at the NFL or our clubs where similar discretion is desired, future witnesses will feel comfortable sharing their experiences knowing that we do not go back on our word. When the Committee has asked questions or requested documents which could violate witnesses' privacy, we have asserted privilege. We will continue to do so to safeguard our commitment.

Earlier this year, the Committee heard testimony from several former employees that included new and direct allegations against Mr. Snyder. We promptly engaged former U.S. Attorney Mary Jo White to investigate those allegations. Because those new allegations were brought to the Committee in a public setting, we will share the results of that investigation when it is completed and will take additional disciplinary action if warranted. Since the Committee opened its inquiry last October, we have fully cooperated, producing more than 460,000 pages of documents, responding to many written questions, engaging in numerous discussions with Committee staff, and I am appearing voluntarily today. We have not allowed the Commanders, or its ownership or counsel, to direct or make decisions regarding the work that was done by the Wilkinson firm, the work currently underway by Mary Jo White, or this Committee's inquiry.

Finally, I want to address the Committee's review of Non-Disclosure Agreements. Our policies do not allow a club to use an NDA to bar someone from participating in a league investigation and nobody who wished to speak to the Wilkinson firm was prevented from doing so by an NDA. We also believe that people who come forward and want to maintain their privacy should be allowed to do so. The assurance that it was safe to participate, and that people could rely on the promise to protect their privacy allowed us to do a thorough review and make the necessary changes in the workplace.

I have been and remain committed to ensuring that all employees of the NFL and the 32 clubs work in a professional and supportive environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, or other forms of illegal or unprofessional conduct.

To that end, we prioritize workplace education and training for all League and club employees on important issues and partner with outside experts to conduct comprehensive trainings on a wide and growing range of important topics. These training programs go well beyond what is required by law or offered in a typical workplace. Our employees are educated on how to prevent harassment and discrimination in the workplace, for example, via our partnership with EverFi, a leading training organization. We also continue to partner with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion-focused organizations like RISE and Paradigm to teach employees about systemic inequity, and to identify and combat unconscious biases. Through required trainings, led by outside subject matter experts, we strive to increase awareness and promote behaviors that make our workplace culture stronger, and more respectful.

Additionally, a central focus of our educational efforts for League and club employees is a comprehensive and mandatory domestic violence and sexual assault (DVSA) education program. Our custom curriculum is provided annually to more than 6,000 people across NFL clubs and League offices, including club owners, League executives and other members of the NFL workforce, club executives and personnel, coaches, and players. This customized education session is also made available to the public through the NFL's website, where it has been used as a resource by the NFL family and beyond (<http://www.nfl.com/causes/dvsa/>).

This educational material is developed in close partnership with the League's DVSA advisors, national experts Tony Porter, Jane Randel, Dr. Beth Richie and Rita Smith, who consult on all DVSA education, training, policies, and partnerships, and who engage privately with individuals who have sought support for personal trauma. These experts are acclaimed advocates with long track records of bringing awareness to these important topics. Mr. Porter is an author, internationally recognized advocate and the CEO and co-founder of A CALL TO MEN: The Next Generation of Manhood. Ms. Randel is the co-founder of NO MORE, an international initiative raising awareness and understanding of domestic violence and sexual

assault. Dr. Richie is Head of the Department of Criminology, Law and Justice and Professor of Black Studies at The University of Illinois at Chicago and the author of *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence and America's Prison Nation*. Ms. Smith is the former executive director of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Outside of our own offices and our 32 clubs, we work year-round to educate communities, support DVSA survivors and provide resources to aid prevention. The NFL is one of the largest corporate funders of DVSA prevention programs in the country, contributing more than \$50 million in total since 2014.

Integral to our commitment to fostering inclusivity in our workplace is ensuring that we continue to build a diverse NFL, one that affords equitable access to opportunity to all regardless of race, gender, ethnicity or background. And we are proud of the significant progress we are making.

At the League offices, more than one-third of our employees are women, and that percentage has continued to grow: 56 percent of all new employees hired in 2021 were women. Our clubs have made similar strides as well. More than one-third of NFL clubs are also owned in whole or significant part by women and 25 percent of business operations roles are now held by women. We are encouraged by this trend toward gender parity and know it makes us a better League, while at the same time recognizing that there is more work to be done.

As we work to build a more diverse NFL, we recognize the importance of providing learning and development opportunities to ensure our diverse talent are identified and supported in their career paths. We partner with top universities, NYU and Stanford, to develop promising diverse leaders across our League offices and our clubs through enriching experiential learning programs, designed to ready our next generation of NFL leaders.

As a League, we recognize our powerful standing as a world leader in sports and entertainment, and embrace our responsibility to lead by example, creating workplaces that prioritize respect and promote diversity, equity and inclusion. We hold ourselves to the highest

standards, and I hope this description of our workplace training programs helps to demonstrate the many ways in which we work to uphold them. Our work to drive progress and improve our practices never ends, but we are proud of the steps we have taken and the impact we can continue to make.

Thank you for inviting me today and I will do my best to answer your questions.