



STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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ATTORNEY GENERAL

DIVISION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE
CIVIL RIGHTS BUREAU

April 6, 2022

Roger Goodell, Commissioner
National Football League
345 Park Ave
New York, NY 10154

Dear Commissioner Goodell,

We write to express our grave concerns about the recent allegations in the New York Times by over thirty former employees of the National Football League, who described a workplace culture that is overtly hostile to women. We, the attorneys general of New York, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oregon, and Washington State, are deeply committed to enforcing federal, state, and local antidiscrimination laws that protect workers and further equality of opportunity for employees throughout our states. With 1100 employees at the N.F.L., 37% of whom are women and 30% of whom are people of color, it is imperative that you ensure that all employees are treated equally, fairly and with the dignity they deserve. In New York, where the NFL is headquartered, the Office of the Attorney General has never hesitated to take action to protect employees from sexual harassment and abuse, whether they are entry-level employees of the Weinstein Company or servers and bartenders at Batali-owned restaurants.

We all watched in horror in 2014 when the video of Ray Rice striking, knocking out, and spitting on his fiancé was made public. In the aftermath, you promised to take gender violence seriously and improve the institutional culture for women at the N.F.L. These recent allegations suggest that you have not. Female employees reported that they were subjected to repeated viewings of the Rice video, with commentary by coworkers that the victim had brought the violence on herself. Other women reported that, in a training intended to improve sensitivity on the issue, they were asked to raise their hand to self-identify if they had been victims of domestic violence or knew someone who had. This is NOT doing better. Antidiscrimination laws in many states, including New York, prohibit employers from subjecting domestic violence victims, as well as women and people of color, to a hostile work environment.

In addition, female employees told the Times that they were held back and criticized for having an “aggressive tone”—an often unfair stereotype of women, especially women of color, who try to advance in a male dominated workplace. This comment is particularly ironic coming

from a manager at the N.F.L., where aggression is prized and celebrated on the field. Other women described experiencing unwanted touching from male bosses, attending parties where prostitutes were hired, being passed over for promotions based on their gender, and being pushed out for complaining about discrimination. In fact, some former female employees have since learned that there were no records of their complaints of gender discrimination.

All of this is entirely unacceptable and potentially unlawful. The N.F.L. must do better—pink jerseys are not a replacement for equal treatment and full inclusion of women in the workplace. Our offices will use the full weight of our authority to investigate and prosecute allegations of harassment, discrimination, or retaliation by employers throughout our states, including at the National Football League.



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