

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 27, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

As the United States prepares to send around 200 athletes to the Winter Olympics in Beijing, we write requesting information on the steps taken by your administration to protect these athletes from being potentially targeted by the Chinese government for political reasons.

Leading up to the games, the Chinese government has intensified its persecution against those who speak out against the human rights violations committed by the regime. In recent weeks, the Chinese government has arrested human rights advocates¹ and shut down news organizations.² Additionally, the Chinese government persists in denying and spreading false information about its campaign of genocide against religious minority groups in Xinjiang. China has also taken forceful actions in recent years to crack down on free speech, including retroactively charging individuals not living in China for alleged violations of its laws regulating speech.³ These behaviors severely undermine confidence in our athletes' physical safety from politically motivated retribution while they are in Beijing to compete.

On January 19, a Chinese Olympic official put Beijing's intentions concerning Olympic athletes in plain terms: "Any behavior or speech that is against the Olympic spirit, especially against the Chinese laws and regulations, are also subject to certain punishment."⁴ To this end, the Chinese government has ensured that technology infrastructures for the games will enable the Chinese government to know private information about each athlete, including a feature to report "politically sensitive content."⁵ Under these terms, American athletes competing in the games are at high risk of being punished or arrested by the Chinese government for their expressions of free speech.

These concerns – validated by China's pattern of and willingness to detain foreign citizens as leverage against other countries – must be addressed.

Unfortunately, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has failed to intervene in the problematic actions taken by the Chinese government. The IOC abuses the principle of neutrality to avoid addressing glaring oppression perpetrated by the government of the country the IOC selected to host the games.

¹ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-detains-prominent-activists-as-olympics-near-citing-state-security-11642588558>

² <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/closes-01032022101300.html>

³ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/hong-kong-issues-arrest-warrant-u-s-citizen-under-new-n1235574>

⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/olympics/2022/01/19/china-winter-olympics-politics-speech/>

⁵ <https://citizenlab.ca/2022/01/cross-country-exposure-analysis-my2022-olympics-app/>

Athletes to the Olympics serve a unique role in representing their home country. As such, your administration has a responsibility to ensure these athletes are secure from arbitrary retribution against them while they are competing.

Considering the significant risks posed to American athletes competing in the Beijing Winter Olympics, we write requesting answers to the following questions:

1. Has every athlete and supporting official travelling to the Olympics received guidance on the risks posed by attending the games, as well as ways in which to mitigate these concerns?
2. Are there contingency plans in place to address possible politically motivated punitive measures taken against athletes while competing in the games, including physical detention of athletes?
3. What steps, if any, have you taken to secure American athletes' data from foreign surveillance?
4. Have you taken steps to ensure additional consular support is in place in the event the Chinese government violates commitments to the IOC and international community on treatment of foreign participants and their rights to free expression during the games? Does the State Department need additional resources for the weeks of the games (including the Paralympics)?
5. Given the recent concerning statements by officials of the Beijing Organizing Committee, what commitments has the administration sought from the IOC in terms of immediate and public actions the committee would take in the event the Chinese government or Beijing organizing officials take actions that threaten or undermine rights and freedoms (including of expression) explicitly outlined in Olympics regulations and charters?

While we applaud your decision to diplomatically boycott the games, the safety of our athletes is paramount, and we appreciate your timely response to each of these questions.

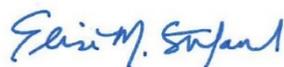
Sincerely,



Ken Buck
Member of Congress



Tom Malinowski
Member of Congress



Elise Stefanik
Member of Congress



Jim McGovern
Member of Congress



Michael McCaul
Member of Congress



William R. Keating
Member of Congress



John Katko
Member of Congress



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress



Rodney Davis
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
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Ann Wagner
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James R. Langevin
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Brian Fitzpatrick
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Josh Gottheimer
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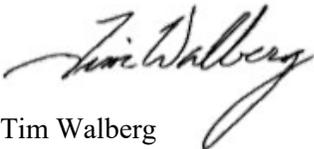
Young Kim
Member of Congress



Daniel Webster
Member of Congress



W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress



Tim Walberg
Member of Congress



Ted Budd
Member of Congress



Mariannette Miller-Meeks, M.D.
Member of Congress



Ronny L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Jeff Van Drew
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Brian Mast
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Joe Wilson
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