

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2509

June 16, 2026

Robert Manfred
Commissioner
Major League Baseball
1271 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

Dear Commissioner Manfred:

I write with grave concern over your reported decision to issue a formal warning to three Major League Baseball (MLB) players for publicly expressing their Christian faith. This follows a high-profile undercover investigation that revealed at least one MLB team discriminated against a player based on his Catholic faith. You must answer for what appears to be a pattern of discrimination within MLB against baseball players who profess their Christian faith.

At a recent baseball game, multiple pitchers for the San Francisco Giants wrote Bible verse references on their caps at a game where players were issued rainbow-patterned hats for “Pride Night.” These verses quote from Genesis 9, which describes God’s design of the rainbow as a sign of His covenant with creation following the flood. For this, your organization has reportedly issued warnings to these players. MLB has said this is a content-neutral policy and that MLB “respect[s] players’ right to free expression.” But this is dubious, given that MLB is openly promoting a political viewpoint and possibly compelling adherence to that viewpoint.

The league’s claim that it merely forbids “writing of any kind” on its uniforms does not survive a cursory review of the league’s recent history. In 2020, MLB itself turned its uniforms and its fields into a billboard for political and social messages. It created jersey patches reading “Black Lives Matter” and “United for Change.” It authorized “BLM” to be stenciled onto pitching mounds. And it suspended its own equipment rules so that players could display progressive political slogans on their cleats. The league went beyond tolerating speech—it designed speech, promoted speech, and shoehorned social and political messages into the game broadcast to millions of Americans. Yet when three players added a handful of characters citing the Book of Genesis to their caps, the league reached for its rulebook.

This does not appear to be an isolated incident. Your organization’s recent action follows an undercover investigation which revealed an admission from a Washington Nationals executive that a Catholic player on the team was not included in promotional materials for the team because of his faith. That executive has since been fired, but not before the anti-Christian bigotry was exposed.

My concern is sharpened by the singular legal position that Major League Baseball occupies. Alone among America’s professional sports leagues, baseball enjoys a sweeping, judicially manufactured exemption from the federal antitrust laws—a privilege the Senate Judiciary Committee has examined with bipartisan skepticism in recent years. A league that benefits from such an extraordinary dispensation owes the public a corresponding measure of accountability, and it invites the closest

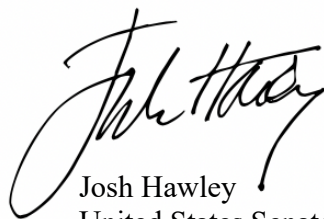
scrutiny when it appears to wield its market power to punish Americans for their beliefs. That exemption, in any event, has never been understood to shield the league from its legal obligation not to discriminate against its employees on the basis of religion.

To assist my review of these matters, please respond to the following requests by no later than June 19, 2026:

1. A complete copy of the uniform regulation under which the Giants pitchers were warned, together with any internal guidance governing writing, markings, or symbols on player apparel and equipment.
2. A list of every instance over the past five seasons in which the league warned, fined, or otherwise disciplined a player or club under that regulation, identifying in each case the message at issue and the action the league took.
3. Any league or club policy, communication, or practice concerning the inclusion or exclusion of players from team-controlled media or promotion on the basis of their religious expression or beliefs.
4. Any policy, directive, or expectation—formal or informal—governing whether players are required, encouraged, or expected to wear Pride Night caps, jerseys, or other themed apparel, and whether a player who declines to do so faces any consequence beyond the league’s written rules, including in playing time, roster or assignment decisions, club media and promotion, or standing within the organization.
5. All approvals, authorizations, or directives by which the league created, permitted, or arranged the display of “Black Lives Matter,” “United for Change,” or comparable messaging on jerseys, mounds, or equipment, and any guidance by which the league relaxed its equipment rules to allow players to display social or political messages.

The freedom to live out one’s faith does not end at the ballpark gate. Americans of every creed are entitled to confidence that the institutions of our national pastime will not single out religious expression for punishment while celebrating messages of the league’s own choosing. I trust the league shares that commitment, and I look forward to your prompt and complete response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Hawley". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "H".

Josh Hawley
United States Senator