

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 30, 2015

Yvan Manini
President
International Basketball Federation /Federation Internationale de Basketball
Route Suisse 5
1295 Miles - Switzerland

Dear President Manini,

We understand that the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) is in the midst of making an interim decision regarding a rule change that would accommodate Sikh basketball players who wish to participate in the sport while maintaining their articles of faith. We seek an update on your decision-making process and support a change to the rules that will ultimately advance religious freedom and equal opportunity for Sikhs, as well as others, who play in FIBA events.

Last year, many of us registered our concern that Sikh players participating in FIBA matches were told that their turbans violated Article 4.4.2 of FIBA's official rules, which states that "Players shall not wear equipment (objects) that may cause injury to other players." A Sikh turban is a piece of cloth that covers one's uncut hair, and an observant Sikh maintains a turban at all times. There is no evidence that a Sikh turban poses a threat to cause injury.

Sikhs participate in a wide variety of sports around the globe, and there has not been a single instance of someone being harmed or injured by a turban. Even at the amateur and professional levels, Sikhs have played sports without a problem. For example, Sikh American Dipanjot Singh played Division I basketball at the University of Illinois at Chicago in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Mr. Singh then went on to play semi-professional basketball in several leagues.

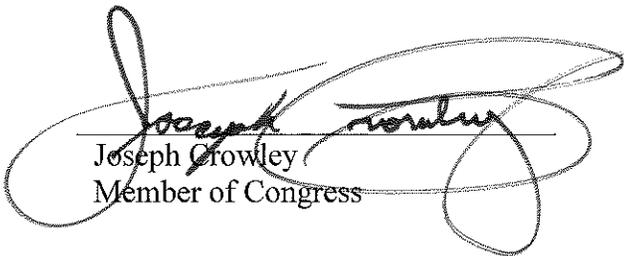
In addition to those playing in the NCAA, the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) recently amended its own policies to ensure that Sikhs and other religious minorities are not subjected to discrimination. Sikh FIFA players may now wear a turban while playing in international soccer events.

Last summer, after widespread anger at the apparent exclusion of Sikh players from FIBA games, the Association shared its plans to revisit this policy in a two-year trial, including evaluation of the rule by FIBA's central board in 2015 and testing at the international level this summer. We understand that a full review will be completed in 2016 on whether there will be a permanent rule change after the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

Given that it is now midway through 2015, we urge you to quickly move ahead with your decision to test at the international level this summer and issue a final ruling as soon as possible so that religious minorities who maintain headwear as part of their faith are able to play basketball freely.

We have seen time and again that sports have the power to unite – basketball included. The sport has gained in international stature in recent decades and is increasingly popular in countries where the use of a turban is commonplace. We urge you to amend your policies to ensure that people all around the world have an equal opportunity to play the game.

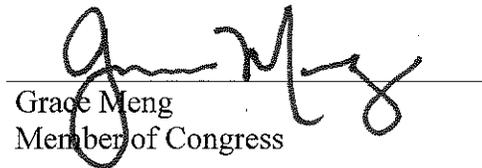
Sincerely,



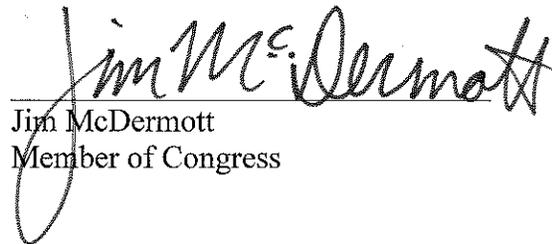
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Grace Meng
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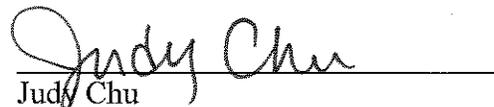
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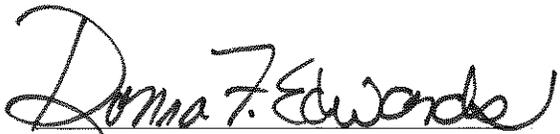
Sheila Jackson Lee
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Bill Pascrell
Member of Congress



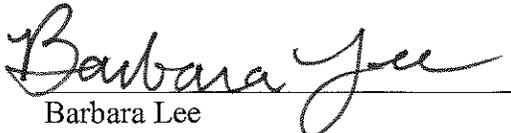
Judy Chu
Member of Congress



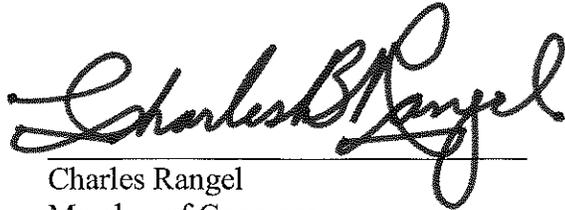
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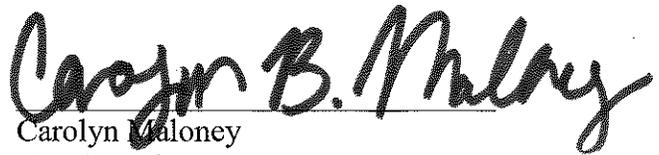
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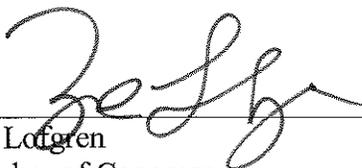
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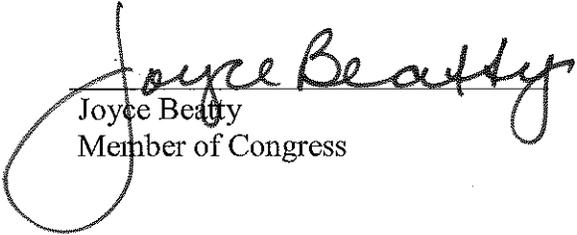
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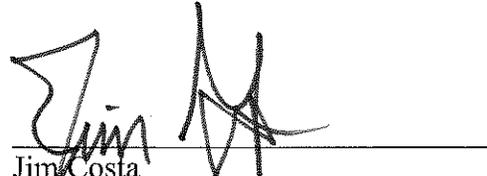

Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

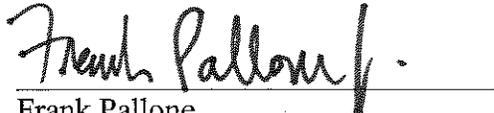

Raúl Grijalva
Member of Congress

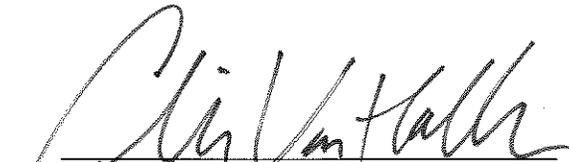

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Bonnie Watson Coleman
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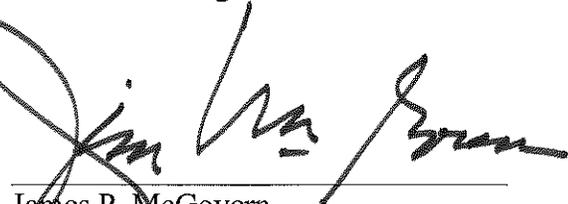

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