

United States Senate

COMMITTEES:
ARMED SERVICES
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION
JUDICIARY
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

March 4, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Commissioner Adam Silver
National Basketball Association
645 5th Ave
New York, NY 10022

Dear Commissioner Silver,

Congratulations on a successful beginning to the 75th National Basketball Association's (NBA) season and the upcoming 67th All-Star Game approaching on March 7th. Basketball fans around the world are energized and excited. I write in regards to the NBA's new agreement with state-controlled China Central Television (CCTV) following a broadcasting ban during the 2019-20 season. Recent media reporting highlighted that this weekend's All-Star Game will commence the full-time return of CCTV airing NBA games.¹

While investigations into the origin of COVID-19 continue in Wuhan, the NBA seems solely focused on mending its relationship with CCTV even though it's clear Communist China will distort, censor or terminate any CCTV broadcast that is seen as a threat to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Multiple sources report that China hoarded protective equipment, destroyed test samples, silenced doctors and lied about the risk of human-to-human transmission.² Recently, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said that we must have data that is "free from intervention or alteration by the Chinese government." So far, this has not been the case.

Furthermore, a New York Times article highlighted a scathing video investigation which disclosed companies affiliated with the CCP using Uyghurs, a predominately Muslim ethnic group, as forced labor in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) to increase production of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). In the XUAR, more than one million Uyghurs and other ethnic groups reside in internment camps, suffering atrocious treatment and enduring horrific crimes including forced abortions and sterilizations.

According to China's National Medical Products Administration, only four companies in XUAR produced medical grade PPE before the COVID-19 pandemic. As of June 30, 2020, the number of PPE-producing companies quickly rose to 51 and at least 17 of those 51 companies used enslaved Uyghurs.³ Some of this slave-labor PPE ended up in the United States. Furthermore, China has a vile history of violating the religious freedom and autonomy of Tibetans and Christians. Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo labeled Communist China's treatment of Muslim Uyghurs as genocide.

In addition, China continues to renege on commitments to democracy under its treaty with Britain regarding the governance of Hong Kong, a CCP political sensitivity with which the NBA has become well

acquainted. A recent Wall Street Journal article highlighted that Beijing continues to threaten Hong Kongers with life-sentences in prison in an attempt to cripple the fight for democracy and freedom.⁴ China has punished the NBA since the Daryl Morey tweet supporting freedom in Hong Kong, which Commissioner Silver admitted cost the NBA hundreds of millions of dollars.

On October 9, 2020 (almost a year to the exact day of Morey's tweet), the NBA stated that the return to CCTV was a result of the continuous goodwill expressed by the NBA towards China's communist government. It is safe to assume that "goodwill" included the \$1 million in medical supplies the NBA sent to the CCP.⁵ China dominates PPE production worldwide, so it is deeply troubling that the NBA would send this aid, especially after witnessing the lack of transparency shown by the CCP throughout the entire pandemic and their continued grave human rights violations.⁶

As the All-Star game draws near, it is imperative that Congress receive further details on the NBA's relationship with China. Please provide a written response to the below inquiries by March 30, 2021.

1. According to Chinese basketball journalist Zhao Huanyu, the NBA has agreed to a new deal with CCTV. Please highlight any details or regulations the NBA has to adhere to per these negotiations with CCTV, especially in regards to speaking on topics related to Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the South China Sea, and the Xinjiang region.
2. What was the total financial impact of the CCTV 2019-20 ban on airing NBA games?
3. What role did NBA China's Chief Executive Officer Michael Ma play in these negotiations? Given that Mr. Ma's father Ma Guoli is a top executive for CCTV Sports, what involvement has the senior Mr. Ma played in these negotiations?

Thank you for your immediate attention. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,


Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator

¹ Jonathan White. "All-Star game will see NBA return to Chinese TV: reports." South China Morning Post. February 22, 2021. <https://www.scmp.com/sport/china/article/3122646/all-star-game-will-see-nba-return-chinese-tv-reports>.

² Will Weissert. "DHS report: China hid virus' severity to hoard supplies." Associated Press. May 4, 2020. <https://apnews.com/bf685dcf52125be54e030834ab7062a8>.

³ Muye Xiao, Haley Willis, Christoph Koettl, Natalie Reneau and Drew Jordan. "China Is Using Uighur Labor to Produce Face Masks." The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/19/world/asia/china-mask-forced-labor.html>.

⁴ The Editorial Board. "Erasing Hong Kong's Democrats." The Wall Street Journal. February 28, 2021. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/erasing-hong-kongs-democrats-11614553015>.

⁵ Tim Reynolds. "NBA returning to Chinese state television after 1-year ban." The Associated Press. October 9, 2020. <https://www.nba.com/news/nba-return-chinese-state-tv>.

⁶ Keith Bradsher. "China Dominates Medical Supplies, in This Outbreak and the Next." The New York Times. July 5, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/05/business/china-medical-supplies.html>.