

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 14, 2026

Jim O’Neal  
Acting Director  
U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
400 7th Street SW  
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Acting Director O’Neil,

We write to urge the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to study how America’s youth are being impacted by the rapid rise of sports gambling across America.

Since the legalization of sports gambling in the United States, there has been limited research examining the extent to which minors are accessing sports betting platforms – whether through illegal access of legitimate platforms or through illegitimate offshore operations. However, the few existing studies are deeply troubling.<sup>1</sup> A 2024 study found that those who begin gambling before the age of 18 are 50% more likely to develop a gambling problem compared to those who begin gambling after the age of 18.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, 1 in 6 parents say they would not know if their child was gambling.<sup>3</sup> We believe policymakers and American families deserve to know the extent to which our children are engaging in potentially addictive and detrimental behavior.

As you know, the CDC’s Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) is conducted every two years to measure the frequency and scope of priority health-risk behaviors in American children.<sup>4</sup> The survey monitors six categories of behavior among children and young adults that lead to unintentional injuries or violence, such as sexual activity, physical activity, substance abuse, and mental health.

We ask that the CDC develop and incorporate questions about gambling by children, and in particular sports gambling, to give policymakers and families a better understanding of how, and to what extent, sports gambling is harming our children. Additionally, to the extent practical, we ask for the YRBSS to include questions regarding which methods children use to engage in

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<sup>1</sup> *Sports Betting Activities Survey April 2023*, NAT’L COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASS’N 3 (May 24, 2023), <https://www.ncaa.org/news/2023/5/24/media-center-ncaa-releases-sports-wagering-survey-data.aspx> (finding that 58% of respondents aged 18 to 22 had engaged in at least one sports betting activity); *Youth Development Survey*, N.Y. COUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING (2022), <https://nyproblemgambling.org/resource-lib-item/youth-development-survey> (23% of students grades 7-12 reported gambling one or more times in the last year).

<sup>2</sup> Levi Pérez, *Too Young to Gamble: Long-term Risks from Underage Gambling*, J. GAMBLING STUD. (May 29, 2024).

<sup>3</sup> *National Poll on Children’s Health*, C.S. MOTT CHILD. HOSP. 1 (Jan. 22, 2024).

<sup>4</sup> *Methodology of the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System – 2013*, CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION 1 (Mar. 1, 2013), <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr6201.pdf>.

sports gambling, such as whether children are accessing legitimate sportsbooks, illegal offshore sportsbooks, or other methods to engage in underage sports gambling.

We ask that you provide Congress with what questions, if any, the CDC plans to introduce in the YRBSS related to gambling, and specifically sports gambling, to help us better understand the scope of this problem, as well as an estimate of the resources needed to add such topics to the YRBSS. Further, please provide Congress with any research or information you may find about the harmful impact of sports gambling on American children, and what steps the CDC is or may be taking to address this rising problem.

It is imperative that we come together to further the research on this growing problem. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Katie Boyd Britt  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Lindsey O. Graham  
United States Senator



Brian Schatz  
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator