



Roger Goodell
Commissioner of the National Football League
345 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10154

November 4, 2015

Dear Commissioner Goodell,

Yesterday, a crucial measure that established nondiscrimination protections for the people of Houston, Texas was needlessly stripped away. The Houston Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO) ensured that millions of city residents and visitors had the ability to swiftly address discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations and more. This provided necessary protections for a diverse array of Houstonians, including people of color, women, veterans, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, the disabled, and many others.

Importantly, HERO provided protections to those most vulnerable to discrimination in their daily lives. Not only do they deserve these protections, they need them. That's why civil rights leaders, small business owners, faith leaders, the NAACP and AARP all fought to defend the measure. It's why President Obama opposed the ordinance's repeal. And it's why companies as diverse as Apple, GE, United Airlines, Dow, HP, BBVA Compass, Marriott and a host of others did the same.

Unfortunately, a particularly vicious ad campaign that attacked and spread lies about LGBT people in the weeks leading up to Election Day resulted in the repeal of these vital nondiscrimination protections. As a result, Houston is now the only major city in the nation without nondiscrimination protections. It is also the largest city in Texas without such a measure; Austin, Dallas, San Antonio and Fort Worth all have nondiscrimination protections like this on the books. Moreover, because the state of Texas lacks explicit protections against discrimination for many of these very same minorities, the repeal of HERO was a tremendous setback for fairness, justice, and equality throughout the region.

With Houston slated to host Super Bowl LI in 2017, we are writing to request an emergency meeting about the urgent need for a nondiscrimination ordinance in this city that will ensure the thousands of employees, contractors and attendees at this event will be fully protected under the law. The Super Bowl will bring hundreds of thousands of visitors to Houston, and attract attention from across the nation and around the world. Commissioner Goodell, you have emphasized the NFL's commitment to diversity and inclusion, respect and fairness. Out of that commitment we hope you will work with us to find a path forward in Houston.

Finding a path to nondiscrimination protections that ensure all Houstonians are treated equally and fairly remains our crucial and urgent mission. We are eager to convene our partners in Houston for an urgent meeting at your earliest convenience to discuss how we can work together to make Houston a city that is welcoming for all residents and visitors. If the Super Bowl is to remain in Houston, these protections need to be in place to ensure the safety and well-being of all those participating.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Chad Griffin

President
Human Rights Campaign

cc: The Honorable James A. Baker III, Honorary Chairman, Houston Super Bowl Host Committee
Ric Campo, Chairman, Houston Super Bowl Host Committee
Sallie Sargent, President and CEO, Houston Super Bowl Host Committee