

**BOBBY L. RUSH**  
1ST DISTRICT, ILLINOIS



**COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE**

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**COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE**

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NUTRITION, OVERSIGHT, AND DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
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February 2, 2022

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection & Commerce  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Schakowsky:

While 70 percent of National Football League (NFL) players are Black, it is unacceptable and reprehensible that, after the recent firing of Houston Texans Head Coach David Culley and Miami Dolphins Head Coach Brian Flores, we are left with only 1 Black head coach in the NFL out of the 32 head coaching positions. Incredibly, there has never been a Black owner of an NFL team.<sup>1</sup> This state of affairs exists despite frequent apologies and empty promises by the NFL owners and its associated leadership “to increase diversity in its leadership positions.”<sup>2</sup> Last year, the NFL hired only two minority coaches, including Culley (who, uncharacteristically, was fired after only one season as head coach).

I am afraid that this lack of diversity is not a coincidence or a mere accident, but more systemic in nature. Simply put, this is bold-faced racism. Black coaches are, too often, put in scenarios where they have no chance to succeed and then promptly fired for failing to perform miracles, as was the case with Coach Culley. Or, they are fired even after coaching winning seasons and after reportedly being pressured to throw games, as was the case with Coach Flores. Moreover, despite policies that require minority candidates to be interviewed for head coaching and other senior openings, I fear that these interviews are too often a sham, with the white candidate selected before the Black candidate even walks through the door for their interview, as has also been alleged by Coach Flores.

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<sup>1</sup> “Will the NFL Be Sued for Race Discrimination against Black Coaches?,” The National Law Review, January 31, 2022, <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/will-nfl-be-sued-race-discrimination-against-black-coaches>.

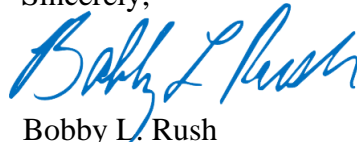
<sup>2</sup> Ben Morse and Jason Hanna, “The NFL Is down to a Single Black Head Coach after It Pledged to Do Better with Diversity,” CNN (Cable News Network, January 26, 2022), <https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/14/sport/david-culley-houston-texans-nfl-spt-intl/index.html>.

Coach Flores is risking his career to raise allegations of racism against the NFL, as did Colin Kaepernick when he protested police violence against Black men and boys. The firing of David Culley and Brian Flores are not unique. These are allegations that surface time and time again and, “[u]nfortunately, it’s a serious problem that the NFL doesn’t seem to have the motivation or will to solve.”<sup>3</sup>

Given your tireless leadership as the Chair of the Subcommittee on Consumer Protection & Commerce, I know you share my commitment to increasing diversity, both on and off the football field. I am also confident that you share my belief that it is the responsibility of this Subcommittee — given our jurisdiction over professional sports — to shine a bright light on these allegations and to thoroughly investigate these concerns. As such, I urge you to swiftly hold a hearing on the issue of systemic racism in the NFL, especially as it relates to ownership, coaching, and general management positions.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff.

Sincerely,



Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

cc:

The Honorable Frank Pallone  
Chair, Committee on Energy and Commerce

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<sup>3</sup> Jemele Hill, “The Continuing Humiliation of Black NFL Coaches,” The Atlantic (Atlantic Media Company, February 2, 2022), <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/01/black-nfl-coaches-brian-flores-david-culley/621344/>.