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National Basketball Association  
Olympic Tower  
645 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10022

Dear Commissioner Adam Silver and NBA Board of Governors,

My name is Bianca Tylek and I am the Executive Director of Worth Rises, a national non-profit criminal justice organization. Today, I am writing to you deeply concerned that Tom Gores, the founder and Chief Executive Officer of Platinum Equity, has a position on the National Basketball Association Board of Governors. Through Platinum Equity, Mr. Gores owns Securus Technologies, the nation's largest prison telecommunications corporations and a major player in the carceral industry. Securus charges incarcerated people and their loved ones exorbitant rates for phone calls made from prisons, jails, and detention centers across the country.

Worth Rises urges you to force the sale of the Detroit Pistons and remove Mr. Gores from your board due to his active participation in the prison industry and deliberate exploitation of Black, Brown, and economically distressed communities.

Securus makes more than \$700 million annually by price-gouging families — that are disproportionately Black, Brown, and low-income — as they struggle to keep in touch with their incarcerated loved ones. The corporation routinely charges as much as \$15 for a simple 15-minute phone call and similarly egregious fees for a myriad other services it peddles to correctional administrators. In exchange for free reign to exploit the people in their custody, Securus pays correctional administrators, including sheriffs, millions in site commissions every year. As a result of Securus' predatory practices, which Mr. Gores has the power to change, one in three families goes into debt trying to stay connected with loved ones behind bars, and 87 percent of those carrying this financial burden are women, predominantly women of color.<sup>i</sup>

In addition to preying on the most marginalized communities, Securus has also violated the constitutional rights of incarcerated people and their loved ones time and time again. Securus has faced lawsuits repeatedly for illegally recording privileged attorney-client conversations. As recently as June, Securus settled a suit for illegally recording 14,000 privileged attorney-client conversations, a fact that

was only revealed because the corporation was hacked and the recordings of over 70 million private phone calls from across at least 37 states were released to the public. Lest you think such incidents are rare or a thing of the past, Securus was sued again just this summer for illegally recording attorney-client conversations and sharing them with law enforcement.<sup>ii</sup>

The list of egregious practices Securus engages in is endless. Since Mr. Gores' firm, Platinum Equity, purchased Securus in 2017 for \$1.6 billion, the corporation has been fined for lying to the federal government,<sup>iii</sup> hacked due to a lack of cybersecurity protocol,<sup>iv</sup> found buying illegal location-tracking data to share with police,<sup>v</sup> and sued for price-fixing with its competitors.<sup>vi</sup> Yet, Mr. Gores claims to be a changemaker at the corporation. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We have made a concerted effort to work with Mr. Gores for nearly two years now. I have personally spent dozens of hours meeting with him and others at Platinum Equity to discuss necessary reforms and their divestment from Securus. Though Platinum Equity abruptly ended conversations in February of 2020, we have reached out to Mr. Gores again in an effort to restart dialogue with no success.

The truth is that Mr. Gores has ignored calls to engage and dragged his feet in implementing reforms, slightly tweaking problematic practices, while taking credit for reforms forced by advocates on the ground legislatively or through public pressure. Worse yet, he has put forth his own uninformed and self-serving "reforms" that demonstrate insincerity about creating real relief for families and tone deafness on the harm he is causing. For instance, two months ago, Securus announced what-it-called a "new reentry initiative" that entailed a partnership with a corporation that uses underpaid incarcerated workers to staff customer service call centers.<sup>vii</sup> The bottom line is that Mr. Gores views the concerns about his investment in Securus as a public relations issue and not an ethical issue.

So, while people across the nation demand racial justice, Mr. Gores continues to amass wealth and benefit from a system that exploits Black people and profits from their pain. He does this even as families struggle through the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impacts. Put simply, he is a prison profiteer who has no place on the board of one of our nation's favorite cultural institutions: the NBA. The NBA cannot allow Mr. Gores to whitewash his active exploitation of marginalized communities by simply asserting that Black Lives Matter. He cannot both be a proprietor of popular culture, especially in the city with highest percentage of Black residents in the U.S. and support and exploit racist policing and policies to build his wealth.

We are encouraged by the NBA's clear assertion during the 2019-2020 season that Black lives matter and moved by the urgency of this current moment. In August, the NBA Board of Governors committed to contributing \$300 million to economic empowerment in Black communities. While we want to applaud your action, it rings hollow as one among you continues to economically exploit Black families. Any financial or social resources Mr. Gores brings to the NBA are tainted and should not be celebrated.

While there is still much more work to be done to build a more equitable world for Black and Brown people, you have a distinct opportunity to rebuke systemic racism and racist exploitation by forcing Tom Gores to sell the Detroit Pistons. I trust that you, like the Board of Trustees of the Los Angeles County

Museum of Art, which recently forced Mr. Gores to resign from its board for all the reasons outlined in this letter,<sup>viii</sup> will choose to stand with those fighting systemic racism rather than those who profit from the racist and exploitative carceral system.

I welcome a conversation to discuss the matter further and in more detail. Please feel free to reach me by email me at [btylek@worthrises.org](mailto:btylek@worthrises.org) or phone at 973-650-4277 to schedule a time.

Sincerely,



Bianca Tylek  
Executive Director  
Worth Rises

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<sup>i</sup> <http://ellabakercenter.org/sites/default/files/downloads/who-pays.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> [https://www.theregister.com/2020/08/19/securus\\_lawsuit\\_attorney\\_client\\_calls/](https://www.theregister.com/2020/08/19/securus_lawsuit_attorney_client_calls/)

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.law360.com/articles/979932/securus-fined-1-7m-for-misleading-fcc-on-merger>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.vice.com/en/article/gykgv9/securus-phone-tracking-company-hacked>

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/28/technology/fcc-cellphones-location-data-fines.html>

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www.classaction.org/news/major-inmate-call-service-providers-hit-with-antitrust-class-action-over-alleged-single-call-price-fixing>

<sup>vii</sup> <https://televerde.com/securus-technologies-selects-televerde-to-enhance-customer-experience-and-lead-inbound-client-support/>

<sup>viii</sup> <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2020-10-09/gores-lacma-platinum-equity-securus-prison-phones>