



August 21, 2017

Mr. Randall Stephenson
National President
Boy Scouts of America
1325 West Walnut Hill Lane
Irving, TX 75015-2019

Dear Randall,

I am writing on behalf of the Executive Committee of the National Board of Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) as a follow-up to our call of August 16 regarding the Boy Scouts of America's (BSA) covert campaign to recruit girls into programs run by the Boy Scouts. For more than 100 years, our organizations have worked in a respectful and complimentary manner, and we have been mutually supportive of one another's mission to serve America's youth. It is therefore unsettling that BSA would seek to upend a paradigm that has served both boys and girls so well through the years by moving forward with a plan that would result in fundamentally undercutting Girl Scouts of the USA. Despite our repeated efforts to engage you in open and honest dialogue about this matter, you delayed conversing with us until, seemingly, a decision was already made.

It has been well documented that BSA is facing declining membership and other significant challenges. Bringing a century old organization into the 21st century requires maintaining cultural relevance while remaining faithful to a founding mission. To that end, Girl Scouts has focused on bolstering 21st century skill building by creating engaging new programming around STEM, high-adventure experiences in the outdoors, entrepreneurship, and other offerings - and have seen these efforts gain nationwide momentum. Most importantly, we have leveraged our single-gender expertise to uniquely serve the needs of girls. From the very beginning, we have sought to be an inclusive, open organization where girls of all backgrounds and walks of life could find a safe space in which to learn, grow, and thrive.

Girl Scouts continues to study and better understand how to help girls meet the challenges of living in a hyper-connected world, and we would welcome the opportunity to share with you some of the successes we have had in bolstering our business model and creating new programming while staying true to our mission. However, as we shared in our call, and despite offering to engage in a constructive, collaborative sharing process, we were disappointed in the lack of transparency as we learned that you are surreptitiously testing the appeal of a girls' offering to millennial parents. Furthermore, it is inherently dishonest to claim to be a single gender organization while simultaneously endeavoring upon a co-ed model. A shift to a co-ed model suggests that you may no longer believe in the research supporting single gender programming. To reiterate, Girl Scouts believes in meeting the needs of America's youth through single gender programming by creating a safe place for girls to learn and thrive. Over the last century, GSUSA has adapted to the changing environment, always prioritizing the health, safety and well-being of girls. For BSA to explore a program for girls without such priorities is reckless.

more...

Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

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I am also deeply concerned about reports of aggressive posturing by Boy Scout leaders towards Girl Scout leaders at recent “family meetings” outlining the proposed girls program. This includes everything from disparaging and untrue remarks about Girl Scout programming, to subtle implications about the weakness of Girl Scouts’ long term market strength. Starting off any program when people are feeling bullied is not in keeping with the founding ideals of either Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts. I implore you to condemn this behavior within your organization and to create consequences for these actions.

GSUSA fundamentally believes it is detrimental to the youth we both pride ourselves on serving for BSA to change its mission, flout its charter, and propose a joint focus on boys and girls. It is untenable to suggest that a “family experience” will be able to remain single gender; rather, the inevitable reality will be that the experience is either co-ed, or one in which one gender is relegated to the sidelines. To be clear this is not a statement on the work that BSA has done and continues to do. Rather, it is a statement on the short-sightedness of thinking that running a program specifically tailored to boys can simply be translated to girls. As the National Board President of the Girl Scout Movement, which has spent a century creating specific programs for girls, I can tell you first hand it cannot, and can assure you that GSUSA would not seek to impart our program to boys. It simply defies our mission, and our principles.

Rather than seeking to fundamentally transform BSA into a co-ed program, we believe strongly that Boy Scouts should instead take steps to ensure that they are expanding the scope of their programming to all boys, including those who BSA has historically underserved and underrepresented, such as African-American and Latino boys. We are confused as to why, rather than working to appeal to the 90 percent of boys who are not involved in BSA programs, you would choose to target girls. We say this as an organization that has focused our recruitment efforts on those girls who have historically not been involved with GSUSA, because we know they will benefit the most.

There is no question that throughout the Boy Scouts’ history, it has provided exemplary opportunities for boys across the country. It is puzzling, therefore, why BSA isn’t returning to its core strength, but rather looking to supplant members of an organization it has partnered with for more than a century. We look forward to sharing strategies that have been very successful for Girl Scouts to expand our footprint. This collaboration would be true to your mission and charter, and represents the best way for your specialized boy-focused programming to serve all of America’s boys, regardless of ethnic or racial group.

We hope that BSA will consider how our historic and vital organizations can thrive and jointly create the next generations of leaders in America. We respectfully request that you carefully consider the significant implications of the decision before you. We welcome an ongoing dialogue, and expect that you will take these matters into serious consideration as you deliberate on the future of your organization, and what it means to be a Boy Scout in 21st century America.

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I formally request that your organization stay focused on serving the 90 percent of American boys not currently participating in Boy Scouts, abide to what your Congressional Charter mandates, and not consider expanding to recruit girls at your October board meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathy Hannan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kathy Hopinkah Hannan
National President,
Girl Scouts of the USA

cc: National Officers of BSA