



November 25, 2019

Robert D. Manfred Jr.
Commissioner of Baseball
Major League Baseball
245 Park Avenue, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10167

Dear Commissioner Manfred:

Baseball wasn't handed the title "America's pastime." It was earned in innings played all over this country in the biggest ballparks and the smallest sandlots. Some Americans express their love for the game by putting on a glove and swinging a bat, but for the vast majority of us it is a game we experience by sitting on the bleachers, eating a hot dog and enjoying a little peace.

As James Earl Jones' character in *Field of Dreams* says, "the one constant through all the years has been baseball." Major League Baseball's plan to shutter minor league teams all over the country will do irreparable harm to the game's relationship with millions of Americans.

I am writing to urge you and the owners of Major League Baseball franchises not to eliminate any of the 42 Minor League Baseball clubs that have been put on the chopping block.

Shutting down 25 percent of Minor League Baseball teams, as you have proposed, would be an absolute disaster for baseball fans, workers and communities throughout the country. Not only would your extreme proposal destroy thousands of jobs and devastate local economies, it would be terrible for baseball.

Over 41 million fans went to see a Minor League Baseball game last year – over a million more than the previous year. Depriving American families in small and mid-sized towns the only opportunity they have to see a live baseball game with future big league players at a reasonable price is both unwise and unnecessary.

It's unwise because you will turn off families and young children across the country to the game of baseball. It's unnecessary because Major League Baseball is making record-breaking profits and the owners of MLB teams have never had it so good.

While Minor League Baseball players make as little as \$1,160 a month (less than the \$7.25 an hour federal minimum wage) and are denied overtime pay, the 20 wealthiest Major League Baseball owners have a combined net worth of more than \$50 billion. The average Major

League Baseball team is now worth nearly \$1.8 billion and made \$40 million in profits last year alone, a 38 percent increase from the previous year.

Let's be clear. Your proposal to slash the number of minor league teams has nothing to do with what is good for baseball, but it has everything to do with greed. Your proposal to throw about 1,000 ball players out of work comes less than three months after an appeals court ruled that Minor League Baseball players could move forward with a class action lawsuit seeking higher wages.

In other words, instead of paying Minor League Baseball players a living wage, it appears that the multi-millionaire and billionaire owners of Major League Baseball would rather throw them out on the street no matter how many fans, communities and workers get hurt in the process. If this is the type of attitude that Major League Baseball and its owners have then I think it's time for Congress and the executive branch to seriously rethink and reconsider all of the benefits it has bestowed to the league including, but not limited to, its anti-trust exemption.

For the communities that would be negatively impacted, for the people who would be hurt, and for what is good for baseball do not shut down these Minor League Baseball teams. Pay the minor league players a living wage and make it easier for them to join a union.

Sincerely,



Bernie Sanders