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July 27, 2017

Mr. Randall Stephenson  
National President  
Boy Scouts of America  
PO Box 152079  
Irving, TX 75015-2079

Dear Mr. Stephenson:

"Be Prepared." Such was the motto of the Boy Scouts back when I took the Scout's Oath, and it remains so today. Every action undertaken while Scouting is in preparation for leading a grounded and meaningful life in adulthood. Scouting prepared me well for a career in public service, just as it prepared other boys in my troop to be good citizens and give back to their communities. The quadrennial Boy Scout Jamboree is the culmination of this program, where tens of thousands of Scouts from across the country gather to celebrate Scouting, participate in group activities, trade patches, and share a love of our country and all it represents. It is always an honor to welcome the sitting President of the United States to a Jamboree, and having the leader of our democratic government address Scouts is a wonderful way to reinforce a love of our Constitution and its principles of equality, justice, and basic rights.

It is deeply unfortunate, therefore, that this year's Jamboree will likely be remembered by posterity not for its camaraderie and outdoor activities but for the deeply troubling remarks delivered by President Donald Trump to the Scouts. Contravening both the basic standards of what is appropriate and the ethos of Scouting, the President turned what should have been an opportunity to inspire America's youth to service into a partisan, political rally. As though unaware of his audience, President Trump launched into criticism of his predecessor, harped on the size of his electoral victory, employed coarse language, threatened senior Administration officials, and lobbied for a partisan policy agenda. The contents of his remarks were not only unsuited to the occasion and audience; they directly contradicted the spirit of Scouting and the tenets of Boy Scout Law. Perhaps even more troubling was the response of the Boy Scouts to the President's invocation of the names of former President Barack Obama and former Secretary of State and Democratic Presidential Candidate Hillary Clinton: they booed. They booed, belying the Boy Scout Oath and negating your statement that the BSA is non-political and non-partisan.

"Helpful. Kind. Cheerful. Reverent." All of these describe the ideal Scout. None of them could be applied to President Trump's speech or the reaction to it. Imagine the confusion of a young Scout attending the Jamboree, having been taught the principles of Scouting only to hear the President of the United States act the complete opposite. My fears regarding the impact of this speech on those who attended are only assuaged by my abiding faith in the good judgment of Boy Scouts to see past the speech's contradictions and trust in the lessons they've learned from their Scoutmasters, parents, and community leaders about the values America truly represents.

I hope you and other national leaders of the Boy Scouts of America will respond to the President's inappropriate remarks in a way that teaches Scouts the valuable lesson that all of us are created equal. That every American is fallible and, at times, needs to hear constructive criticism. That even the President of the United States, when he does something wrong – something that contradicts not only the principles of the Scout's Oath but the spirit of his own oath of office – must answer for it. This could be the Jamboree remembered for a President's unfitting remarks, or it could be the Jamboree remembered for its participants learning a valuable lesson in holding democratically elected leaders accountable to the high standards to which we all must hold ourselves.

Best Regards,



Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress  
11<sup>th</sup> District, Virginia