

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 12, 2025

## VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Cathy Engelbert  
Commissioner  
Women's National Basketball Association  
New York, New York 10022

Dear Commissioner Engelbert:

We write to you in support of Nashville's bid to expand the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) and host a franchise in our great state. Nashville is a cultural Mecca: from music to food to sports, Tennessee's capital has it all. People *want* to visit Nashville—evidenced by the record 16.4 million visitors in 2023.<sup>1</sup> By 2033, Nashville is projected to exceed the impressive benchmark of 20 million annual visitors.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Nashville has been named a top global travel destination by major travel outlets for more than a decade, in part because of the state of Tennessee's investment in our unique culture and industries.<sup>3</sup>

The investment in our sports teams is evident, and Tennessee's sports fans are unmatched. Tennessee's fanbases extend across cities—everyone roots for the Predators, the Titans, Nashville Soccer Club, and the Memphis Grizzlies. In the good times and the bad, that support would be extended to the Tennessee Summitt.

Additionally, Nashville undoubtedly has the infrastructure to host a WNBA franchise. The Tennessee Summitt would play in Nashville's Bridgestone Arena, home of the Predators. This facility has won multiple awards for its superior programming, effective marketing, and incredible experience, including the Pollstar Arena of the Year Award, the International Entertainment Buyers Association Venue of the Year Award, the Academy of Country Music Arena of the Year Award, and the Country Music Association Touring Award. Not only will Bridgestone be open to the Tennessee Summitt, but the investors supporting the bid have committed to building a state-of-the-art practice facility in Nashville. As long-term advocates for opportunities and equal facilities for female athletes, we are confident that the Tennessee Summitt will be well served in Nashville.

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<sup>1</sup> Molly Davis, *16.8 million visitors: Why Nashville's Record-Breaking Tourism Industry Keeps Growing*, THE TENNESSEAN (May 31, 2024), <https://www.tennessean.com/story/money/2024/05/31/nashville-tourism-soars-2023-more-growth-expected/73892900007/>.

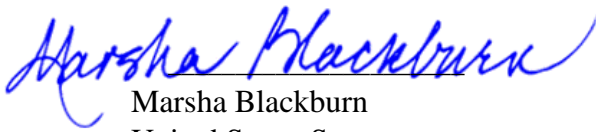
<sup>2</sup> Peyton Kennedy, *Nashville Tourism Continues to Break Records, Outpace Country*, WKRN (May 29, 2024), <https://www.wkrn.com/news/local-news/nashville/nashville-tourism-continues-to-break-records-outpace-country/>.

<sup>3</sup> Alicia Patton, *Nashville named among Tripadvisor's top 2025 U.S. destinations*, WKRN (January 18, 2025), <https://www.wkrn.com/news/local-news/nashville/nashville-named-among-tripadvisors-top-2025-u-s-destinations/>.

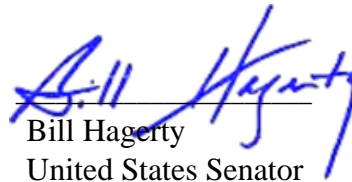
Some of the strongest women in history have called Tennessee home—from suffragist Anne Dallas Dudley to artist and philanthropist Dolly Parton to athletes like Wilma Rudolph and Pat Summitt. A WNBA team in Tennessee—which would become only the second franchise in the Southeast—would serve as a beacon of opportunity for women and girls in the state and across the South.

We are grateful for the legacy of Pat Summitt and to individuals like Bill and Chrissy Haslam, Candace Parker, Peyton Manning, Faith Hill, Tim McGraw, and others who have brought this forward. We urge you to award the bid for the Tennessee Summitt, and we stand ready to provide you with any additional information or support you may need as you consider this proposal.

Sincerely,



Marsha Blackburn  
United States Senator



Bill Hagerty  
United States Senator