

## American, Canadian and Mexican professional soccer clubs team-up with Play Proud to tackle homophobia and promote LGBTQ+ inclusion in boardrooms, locker rooms, and stands

*The Common Goal program, which starts on April 11<sup>th</sup>, was created to ensure safer stadiums and communities for the LGBTQ+ community and includes 100 hours of in-person training for professional and youth club representatives.*

Today a coalition of clubs from Major League Soccer, the National Women's Soccer League, United Soccer League, Liga MX, and the Canadian Premier League has announced the launch of a 12-month LGBTQ+ inclusion training program led by the Common Goal project, Play Proud. The program includes 100+ hours of in-person LGBTQ+ inclusion training by Common Goal and its partners Inside Inclusion, Impact International, and Stonewall UK, which will commence on April 11<sup>th</sup> in Los Angeles with the first 5-day residential event hosted by Angel City FC. The second residential event will take place in Mexico in December this year, hosted by Club Tigres.

Angel City FC, Club Tigres, Chicago Fire FC, Oakland Roots, Pacific FC, Philadelphia Union, San Diego Loyal SC and San Diego Wave FC are the first clubs that have committed to work together in order to eradicate homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia and promote inclusion in soccer and society. Their commitment aligns with the build-up to the 2026 World Cup, co-hosted by the US, Canada, and Mexico.

Working in eight key soccer markets across the continent, each club delegation will also be joined by a leader of their supporter's group and one community-based soccer coach from their city. The community organizations include: Chicano Federation, Football for Her, Soccer Without Borders, Futbol Mas, Canada SCORES, American SCORES Chicago, Starfinder Foundation, and YMCA of San Diego country.

In the year of the 2022 Qatar World Cup, when homophobic chants have halted the most recent MLS and Liga MX all-star game, and a myriad of anti-gay and anti-trans legislation has emerged in the United States, the Play Proud coalition has decided that now is the time for action.

"It's time professional clubs make it a priority to work directly with their fans and their local communities to create a new reality for LGBTQ+ people in sport," said Julie Uhrman, Angel City FC President and Co-Founder. "It's important to us, as we kick off our inaugural season, that LGBTQ+ identified fans, ACFC employees, and youth in our community programs know that our club is a welcoming space for them. ACFC is committed to ensuring all people feel safe being part of our soccer community."

Common Goal's Play Proud program launched in 2018 and has trained youth soccer coaches in 13 countries, reaching over 410,000 young people in some of the most underserved communities worldwide. Play Proud is a program that works with all stakeholders in soccer to make communities and stadiums a safer space for the LGBTQ+ community.

Lilli Barrett-O'Keefe, Common Goal U.S. Director and Play Proud founder, said: "With the World Cup in Qatar looming at the end of the year, there is a real hunger for immediate action that will help tackle homophobia and discrimination in soccer and in society. We're focused on what the soccer industry has the potential to become, and we are creating tangible ways to facilitate this positive transformation. Play Proud offers a platform for diverse industry stakeholders to become part of a holistic and systemic solution to homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. The fact that there has been such incredible demand to be part of

this Play Proud project from clubs across all three of the major leagues in the United States, plus top clubs in Canada and Mexico, demonstrates the desire for action now to ensure that 2026 is a true celebration of diversity and inclusion, where we can all see the power of collective action in soccer at its full potential.”

For the launch of the Play Proud coalition, Common Goal has teamed-up with the design lab, Amplifier, to launch an exclusive line of Augment Reality (AR)-activated merchandise. Play Proud AR-activated art links fans to a virtual and interactive education tool to help prevent, respond, and repair issues of homophobia in the stands. 100% of the proceeds from sales of merchandise will go to Play Proud.

Jill Ellis, former US Women’s National Team Head Coach and San Diego Wave FC President, said: “We are happy to partner with Common Goal on this important initiative. We have seen the evolution of LGBTQ+ visibility on the global and national stage and we are excited to implement this groundbreaking curriculum in our community.”

Play Proud is open to all soccer stakeholders who would like to be part of the solution to ending homophobia and discrimination in soccer and society. Play Proud 2022 was made possible by contributions from DAZN, Adidas, Chicago Fire FC, Angel City FC, San Diego Wave FC, Club Tigres and the Play Proud Ambassadors Group.

### **About Common Goal**

Common Goal is a collective social movement that unites the soccer community in tackling the world's biggest challenges of our times.

The movement aims to inspire and mobilize every stakeholder of the soccer economy to play a meaningful role in serving the wellbeing of our people and planet. To do so, Common Goal provides a simple and impactful mechanism for professional soccer players, managers, officials, clubs, and other stakeholders, to pledge a minimum of 1% of their earnings to high-impact initiatives that use the game to drive progress towards the Global Goals - from advancing gender and racial equality to driving jobs and growth and promoting greater peace and social justice.

In doing so, Common Goal aims to establish an intrinsic link between soccer as a business and soccer as a tool for social change.

The movement’s long-term vision is to unlock 1% of the entire football industry’s revenues — estimated at €50 billion per year.

Since its inception more than 200 professional football players and managers from over 40 countries have joined – including Paulo Dybala, Pernille Harder, Timo Werner, Serge Gnabry, Casey Stoney, Jürgen Klopp and Megan Rapinoe. Also influential football figures have joined the movement, such as UEFA President Aleksander Čeferin, and the iconic Eric Cantona, plus professional clubs such as FC Nordsjælland, from the elite league in Denmark, and Oakland Roots, from the USL in North America.