



**NATIONAL
CENTER ON
SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION**

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January 7, 2019

Mr. James A. Skinner
Executive Chairman
Walgreens Boots Alliance Inc.
200 Wilmot Rd
Deerfield, IL 60015

Dear Messers. Skinner and Ashworth:

I am writing with concern regarding the prominent display of *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue* in your stores. At the National Center on Sexual Exploitation—a non-partisan nonprofit in Washington DC dedicated to addressing the full spectrum of sexual exploitation—we recognize the cultural influence your stores have when promoting different products.

Unfortunately, we believe your stores are promoting a message of male sexual entitlement (the likes of which cause sexual harassment and violence as exposed by the #MeToo movement) by promoting the *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue* in your checkout aisles. Will you commit to remove this annual magazine issue from the checkout aisles of your stores, permanently?

Female athleticism should be celebrated, yet the central purpose of the *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue* is to objectify women as sexual objects. Sexual objectification has no place in your family-friendly store.

Research shows that when someone is being objectified the objectifier is viewing them as if they do not possess a real, individual mind and as if they are less deserving of moral treatment.¹ In a society that's constantly reeling with fresh scandals of sexual assault—from college campuses to media empires—the potential consequences for viewing women as mere plastic playthings are immediately apparent.

Objectification theory gives us a framework for understanding the experiences that many (if not most—if not all) women have: being perceived or treated as an object that is valued for its use by others. This typically occurs when a woman's body, or body parts, are

exaggerated or isolated from her personhood in order to serve the male sexual desire. It is commonly accepted that media promoting these images are “likely to contribute to mental health problems that disproportionately affect women (i.e., eating disorders, depression, and sexual dysfunction).”²

We recognize that your corporation wishes to promote healthy female body positivity in magazine products, but *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue* has failed to do this. Women of all shapes, sizes, and ages deserve more than being reduced to body parts for another’s sexual desire. Women who have achieved remarkable athletic feats do not deserve to be put back into the box of male sexual accessibility in order to promote body positivity.

This is a growing cultural recognition. For example, Ada Hegerberg the world’s best soccer player was asked to twerk on stage after receiving the 2018 Women’s Ballon d’Or Award.³ The host was widely condemned for the sexist overtones that sought to focus on Hegerberg’s sexuality instead of her accomplishments. *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue* is the magazine equivalent to this scandal.

We believe your corporation would receive widespread support for distancing yourself from this outdated and sexist issue. Over the course of several years, we have heard from thousands of individuals who state that they wish they could go through check-out lines without being unwillingly confronted with the *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue*. Will you commit to remove this annual magazine issue from the checkout aisles of your stores, permanently?

We welcome dialogue on these issues. You can contact us at public@ncose.com or 202-393-7245.

Respectfully,



Patrick Trueman
President & CEO
National Center on Sexual Exploitation

CC:
Mr. Richard Ashworth, President of Operations

¹ Loughnan, Steve, et al. “Objectification Leads to Depersonalization: The Denial of Mind and Moral Concern to Objectified Others.” *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Wiley-Blackwell, 8 May 2010, onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/ejsp.755.

² Szymanski, Dawn M., et al. “Sexual Objectification of Women: Advances to Theory and Research 1ψ7.” *The Counseling Psychologist*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2010, pp. 6–38., doi:10.1177/0011000010378402.

³ Kwesi O’Mard, Marcus. “World’s Best Women’s Soccer Player Asked To ‘Twerk’ After Receiving Award” December, 2018. <https://nesn.com/2018/12/womens-ballon-dor-winner-asked-to-twerk-after-receiving-award/>