



January 25, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Governor Newsom:

On behalf of our communities, we want to extend our appreciation for your guidance over the past year as we all grapple with the worst public health emergency our state has ever faced. Our state extends its upmost respect and admiration to our frontline heroes who have selflessly fought to get this virus under control.

As representatives for various and diverse regions in the state, we pride ourselves on listening to the voices and concerns of our constituents. One issue that is repeatedly brought to our attention is the devastating impact the cancellation and postponement of youth sports is having on our children. While we appreciate your administration's December 2020 "Outdoor and Indoor Youth and Recreational Adult Sports" guidance, we believe there is another approach. Today we asking you to allow our county Public Health Directors the discretion to allow youth sports to play if each sport can demonstrate they have taken appropriate measures to minimize the chance of spreading Covid-19 as soon as safely possible.

According to a recent study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "Adolescents aged 12–17 years accounted for the largest proportion of children's mental health–related ED visits during 2019 and 2020. During weeks 12–42, 2020, the proportion of mental health–related visits for children aged 5–11 years and adolescents aged 12–17 years increased approximately 24% and 31%, respectively compared with those in 2019." The stress of the pandemic has been hard on all of us, but science and statistics are proving it has been hardest on our children. A contribution to the increased in mental-health issues arising in our kids can surely be attributed that for many around our state, their source of extra-curricular activities have been cancelled. Unfortunately, due to this, many have no outlet to escape to or continue their physical exercises.

Many states around our country, such as Minnesota and Texas, have shown great results at allowing their sports seasons to continue as long as certain protocols have been followed. Here



at home, as outlined by the Let Them Play Coalition, “The workout data collected from over 275 California high school football programs from across the state since May 1, 2020, reveals that professional coaches, while following protocols, have created safe environments for our state’s youth. These coaches follow local, county and state guidelines and collectively create environments where students and coaches work together with extremely low, Covid transmission with zero hospitalizations and zero deaths.” We recommend the state follow those same procedures that have worked here and around our country. For example:

1. Coaches, staff, and athletes will be required to wear face coverings while inside locker rooms, meeting rooms, training rooms, and any other campus areas where students may congregate other than shower facilities.
2. Coaches, staff and athletes will wear face coverings during practice while not actively exercising.
3. Athletic facilities (locker rooms, offices, practice spaces, bleachers, etc) will be disinfected and sanitized per industry guidelines, before, during, and after practices & games. Emphasis will be given to ensuring disinfecting high touch surfaces and surfaces that are used by multiple student-athletes, disinfecting between users.
4. An individual who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and who is not evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not return to athletics until the individual has completed the necessary tests.
5. If an individual who has been in areas where athletics have been conducted is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19, the school or facility will notify the local health department, in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations, including confidentiality requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The school or facility will close off areas that are heavily used by the individual with the lab-confirmed case until the non-porous surfaces in those areas can be disinfected. Contact tracing would then commence with those in contact with the athlete or coach.

For many children around our state, youth sports are a pipeline to escape poverty and have a chance at higher education via scholarships. A local coach in my district eloquently pointed out that as a result of this pandemic “All of us are going through the same storm, but not in the same boat.” I cannot think of a better way to describe how sports are a lifeboat for our youth looking to make something of themselves. Without the ability to play and demonstrate their skills to scouts and schools, many students have reported their desire to drop-out of high



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school altogether or not even consider going to college. We must act quickly before we lose an entire generation of students.

We thank you for your consideration of this proposal and the chance to show not only California, but the rest of the nation, that our state is still the land of dreams and golden opportunities. If you have any questions about this idea, please contact my Chief of Staff, Jennifer Beall, at Jennifer.Beall@asm.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



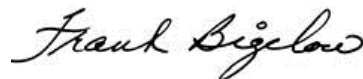
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Assemblywoman, 73rd District



Thurston "Smitty" Smith
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