



Honorable Governor Jay Inslee
PO Box 4002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Secretary John Wiesman, DrPH, MPH
PO Box 47890
Olympia, WA 98504-7890

Dear Governor Inslee and Dr. Wiesman,

The undersigned organizations represent the WA State Sports Alliance; a collaboration of sports organizations and governing bodies throughout the State of Washington. Our leagues and organizations represent over 600,000 Washingtonian families for whom youth sports are a passion and key component of their day-to-day lives.

As a group representing community youth sports throughout the State of Washington, we appreciate and respect the State's science-driven approach to keeping our communities safe and securing public health. However, we are very concerned for the mental, emotional and physical health of our State's youth.

Sports play a vital role in the mental and physical health of our children and adults. Currently, sports organizations are hampered in our ability to fulfill our mission, and Washington's children are paying the price – especially those at the lowest socioeconomic level. Without local options for play, this has become an equity issue for our youth and families.

We respectfully make two requests to the State of Washington regarding "School and Non-school Youth Team Sports Indoor and Outdoor and Adult Recreational Team Sports indoor and Outdoor" at this time:

First, we are requesting that sport teams be allowed to practice and train together regardless of Phase. These youth teams have already self-selected into this cohort group. They separate into groups of six for practices but the reality is they have already intermingled in larger groups within their entire team. Similarly, children are placed in stable pods of 10-20 children for educational and childcare purposes in accordance with DOH guidelines. Teams could be verified by rosters from governing bodies like YMCA, AAU, USA Volleyball, US Soccer, etc.

Second, we are requesting that sports be allowed to move one risk category less if the participants and support staff are wearing masks the entire time. Mask wearing has been an effective tool in stopping the spread of the virus. Masks have been an effective tool for a safe return to play in states like Colorado and Minnesota.

The current guidelines are provoking unintended consequences throughout Washington which will likely continue and escalate. For example, an increasing number of families are traveling out of Washington to participate in youth sports competitions. By leaving the state to compete against teams from other parts of the country, student-athletes are inadvertently putting themselves, and the communities to which they return, at increased risk of COVID-19 infection. According to the CDC's guidelines, those student athletes' risk jumps from

the second level of risk (*Increasing Risk: Team-based practice*), straight to the fifth and highest level of risk (*Highest Risk: Full competition between teams from different geographic areas*).

We would like to reiterate our appreciation of the State's commitment to securing the safety of our communities, and we believe all of us are truly "on the same team" in pursuing this objective. Through these two steps we can begin to address the deteriorating mental, emotional and physical health of our youth and the future of our state. We would like to offer our vast experience in youth sports to assist the State in its efforts, and we welcome an opportunity to meet with representatives from the Governor's administration to help facilitate a safe return of a much needed service for the youth and families in Washington State.

Respectfully,

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