



Pine River Area Schools

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January 28, 2021

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer
Governor of Michigan
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Restarting Contact Sports in Michigan

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer,

I am writing this letter on behalf of our Pine River Area Schools' student-athletes, parents, coaches, community, and Board of Education. Our winter coaching staff and athletes are eager to return to their sports season and our parents and Board are confused about the push to return our students pre-Kindergarten through twelve to the classroom statewide, while denying kids the ability to participate in contact sports. This seems contrary. If we want kids and families to participate in school, why would we shy away from that thought process concerning athletics? How can it be okay to put 30 kids in a classroom for seven and-a-half-hours, but not okay to have ten kids on a basketball court that is six times larger and has better air movement for one-and-a-half hours?

The number of documented, positive COVID-19 transmissions during the recent MHSAA's fall season proved minimal and our athletes, coaches, and parents only became more educated on the wearing of PPEs and adhering to CDC and MDHHS recommendations as the season progressed.

For your consideration, our student-athletes participate in organized interscholastic sports for the purpose of being part of a team, setting and realizing personal and team goals, and the enjoyment of sport. Participating in sports is a healthy outlet for our student-athletes during a period of time in our history where kids are overly confined and relegated to a forgotten page.

To be blunt, in Michigan, we have proved that junior high and high school sports are safe and productive venues for our youth.

I hope that you will reconsider the shutting down of contact sports and allow them to begin on February 1 as was previously planned. Asking our kids and coaches to continuously defer their season while our COVID numbers drop and we push for a return to face-to-face instruction across the state makes little sense. Playing contact sports—all sports—is important to our district and our community, and indeed, our entire state. Please demonstrate your leadership and return the authority for our athletes in grades 7-12 to participate in organized contact sports today.

Sincerely,

Matt Lukshaitis, Superintendent