



Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM)

September 24, 2020

On behalf of the twenty-four public school superintendents, PSSAM has prepared the following statement in response to the recent press conference and announcement urging a change to the currently approved, and agreed upon, plan for a second semester return to competitive athletics.

All superintendents, along with our local boards of education, have been working diligently to maneuver the complexities of transitioning students back into the classroom. While not insurmountable, these logistics pose significant operational challenges as we adhere to the CDC health and safety guidelines, and monitor local health metrics. Additionally, each local school system was required to submit an interscholastic athletic and co-curricular activity plan as part of our local recovery plans, and all allowed for some level of out-of-season play. The local plans were approved by the State and many of these activities are currently underway or scheduled to begin in the next few weeks.

We know that in-person learning is the most effective delivery of education, and we are eager to return children to school buildings. We are just as eager to see students back on the playing fields, participating in drama and debate clubs, and all the other enriching co-curricular activities provided at school. These activities are also governed by the same CDC safety guidelines with the additional prohibition on spectators at all events. Additionally, if access to sports and other co-curricular activities is only available to students who are privately transported to school, we are exacerbating inequities we are already facing during this pandemic.

We understand and appreciate the social and emotional toll on students in this virtual environment, and we are keenly aware of the physical and mental benefits of athletics and other co-curricular activities. Public school systems, like many other businesses, industries, and even government agencies, are wrestling with a “return to normal;” however, the bar must be higher when it comes to our children. We have learned so much more about this disease since the initial months of quarantine, and there is certainly more unknown, which makes it even more imperative that we get this right. As we return to classrooms, so too will we return to play, but the timing may not be perfectly aligned. In fact, the timing and conditions of these activities were made clear in local reopening plans presented to the public in August. In conclusion, as adults, parents, educators, and superintendents, it is our obligation and privilege to protect the health and safety of Maryland’s schoolchildren, while providing the most effective educational environment in this global pandemic.

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