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Chair
Education, Health, and
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The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

September 24, 2020

Dr. Karen B. Salmon
State Superintendent
Maryland State Board of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Dr. Salmon:

I have just learned that you and the governor have reversed your previous position on opening high school athletics.

As someone who sees the benefit of sports and, as a former coach, I appreciate your intent. However I'm a bit surprised since most of the 24 school systems have not felt it safe enough to return large numbers of students to in-person instruction. I would hope that this action is based on health and science-based information and not simply on local community pressure.

With this reversal, will you require daily or weekly testing of these athletes? Will you use rapid tests so schools will have quick results to stop any possible spread if the tests return positive? Has the state provided tests to all county programs wishing to implement this early return plan?

As you know, both college and professional athletic programs have utilized extensive testing in reopening contact sports. In fact, these testing regimens have resulted in programs and practices as well as games being suspended or postponed when tests return positive to prevent the spread of the infection to other teammates or opposing teams. Just today, because of testing, it was announced that three college games were postponed.

Competition is a great motivator for young people as is team-building but they should only be pursued if testing and protocols are in place.

Have you provided specific guidance today as to how to handle practices and games? What protections have you required for interscholastic sports? Have you also agreed to provide the resources needed for these protections?

Have local health officers agreed to this return? Have they been asked to put protocols in place? Does the Secretary of Health agree with this action? What procedures has he required?

In fact, your press release said that you came to this early return decision after discussion with the 24 local superintendents. Did they agree with this early return? Do these superintendents who actually run these large systems support this early return of sports?

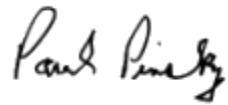
The National Basketball Association as well as the Women's National Basketball Association have been very successful in protecting the health of their players but they have pursued their sports in a bubble.

But if this is done without specific protocols in place to protect our children, it objectively amounts to pandering to what might be considered "public will."

Just as sports and competition brings a community together, so do funerals, particularly for young people.

Please share as soon as possible what protocols and testing are in place for this just announced return to high school athletics.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Pinsky". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P".

Paul G. Pinsky