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August 26, 2020

Honorable Governor Andrew M. Cuomo
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

The closing of schools due to the pandemic has led to missed academic and social opportunities for all students. This has caused significant anxiety for students and their families. Adding to that anxiety has been the pause in public school organized athletics. We know you empathize, as do we, with the students that want to get back on the field and court this fall, yet we have no choice but to urge you to reconsider the decision to allow school athletics to begin September 21.

Since schools closed in March, Superintendents have been laser-focused on how to get their students back in the classroom this fall. Superintendents have put their plans out to the public and the vast majority are set for some level of in-person learning starting in a couple of weeks. Authorizing school athletics could jeopardize successful resumption of in-person learning for students.

We have struggled to reconcile why students in physical education classes must be 12 feet apart per reopening guidance, yet contact athletics and other activities that regularly bring athletes into close proximity are deemed safe at this time. Additionally, the logistical challenges of school athletics during the pandemic and the initial re-opening of school such as transportation, locker rooms, spectators, personnel, remote learners, A/B hybrid scheduling, and other issues are too significant to undertake at this time without detracting from the primary goal of bringing students back to school safely.

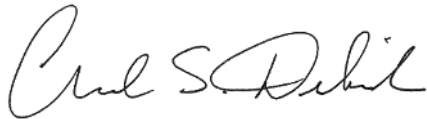
This is an uncertain time for schools. Our leaders want a successful reopening and are expressing a strong desire to defer all other activities that could endanger the health and safety of students and delay their start in the classroom. Students need to be in school, with their friends and teachers as soon as possible. School leaders need to be focused on this effort and not have their attention diverted to extracurricular activities at this moment. It is our view that school athletics will risk this endeavor and that is not a compromise we believe should be taken.

We are sympathetic to the students and families that have been hoping and preparing for school athletics this fall. We are not currently calling for cancelling all athletics for the school year. We would request a delay in school athletics until January 1. As we approach the new year, we

should collaborate with all stakeholders to develop and agree on a plan to consolidate all three athletic seasons into the 2nd semester so that student athletes have an equitable opportunity to participate in the sport of their choice.

We thank you for consideration of this request and will continue to collaborate with various athletic associations, students, and families to get school athletics up and running safely, however we must first prioritize in person learning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles S. Dedrick". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Charles S. Dedrick, Ed.D.
Executive Director