

December 9, 2020

To the Respected Members of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association Board of Directors:

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The Pennsylvania Principals Association formally requests the PIAA take action by delaying the start of the winter sports season. The Pennsylvania Principals Association represents nearly 3500 elementary and secondary principals across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. That representation includes advocating, advising, and supporting members during times of adversity and difficult decisions. With a membership as large as ours, spread across all demographic and geographic regions of our state, we realize that finding unanimous support on sensitive issues rarely occurs. We do, however, believe we have a responsibility to weigh in on issues that may place our members, as well as the students they serve, in a dangerous situation or may cause those members to be considered culpable for the actions they have been directed to carry out.

Such is the case with the current discussion at PIAA with the winter sports season. Our nation and our state are faced with the crisis of a generation. We, as principals, are being directed to carry out plans to hold a winter sports season in the midst of this deadly outbreak. We are directed to do so while many of our schools have been closed for in-person instruction because the community spread is so prevalent that the Pennsylvania Department of Health has directed us to move to remote learning. Instead of creating a statewide solution, PIAA is pushing the decision to the local level, requiring school boards to make decisions for their individual school district which may be diametrically opposed to decisions made by neighboring school districts. First, this results in pressure from the community, parents, and student body for school districts to move forward with practices and competitions that most certainly place student athletes in a vulnerable and dangerous situation. Second, relinquishing responsibility for a statewide decision and pushing this down to athletic districts, leagues, and individual school districts creates inequity across the state. Finally, holding these contests at this point in time creates potential liability that will not be shouldered by leagues or athletic districts, but will instead be carried by the principals who have been directed to engage in the winter sports season.

There are certainly times when the tenets of ‘local control’ are essential in a state the size of Pennsylvania. We believe, however, that this is not that

*Our mission is to ensure a quality education for every child by comprehensively supporting the educational leaders of our schools.*

**PENNSYLVANIA PRINCIPALS ASSOCIATION**

**122 Valley Street—Enola, PA 17025**

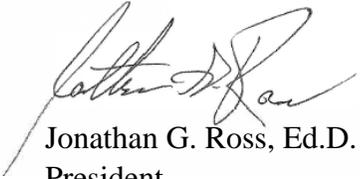
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*Affiliate of the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals  
Serving and Supporting Principals, Assistant Principals and Other Educational Leaders*

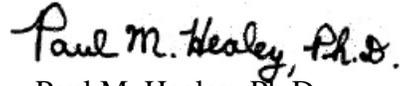
time. During times of crisis, we look to leadership for action and when that leadership relinquishes responsibility, confusion and chaos will ensue.

A delay of the winter sports season we believe, offers an alternative to losing an entire season. This will allow school leaders the time to implement the mitigation efforts Governor Wolf and Secretary Levine have implemented. It will allow for the much anticipated and publicized outbreak, that is certain to come after the holidays, to subside and provide a clearer picture of what the coming months hold in light of the distribution of a vaccine. Our superintendents and school board presidents have attested, by providing their signatures to a legally binding document and submitting that to PDE, that we will comply with mitigation efforts. Yet, it is up to the building principal to ensure that these are carried out while students participate in curricular, extracurricular, and athletic activities. In short, we believe a high school principal, serving as the leader of the athletic programs in his/her school is at risk of violating the Attestation Process by allowing the winter sports season to move forward at this time.

Respectfully submitted,



Jonathan G. Ross, Ed.D.  
President  
Pennsylvania Principals Association



Paul M. Healey, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
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