



Board of Education

Kurt Case, President • **Robin McClellan**, Vice President
Dave Chivers, Member • **Sarah Lamb**, Member • **Harlan "Scoot" Wilkins**, Member

Nov. 13, 2020

Gov. Gary Herbert
Utah State Capitol
P.O. Box 142220
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-2220

Dear Gov. Herbert:

The Uintah School District Board of Education appreciates the difficult position you are in as the leader of our state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, as a Board we are unanimously opposed to any suspension of extracurricular sports and activities in our schools beyond Nov. 23. This is based on several factors, including the unintended consequences of your Nov. 8 executive order, which jeopardize the health and safety of our students.

With the implementation of your order, organized practices and workouts ceased. Coaches and advisors trained in our district's risk mitigation protocols can no longer work with their student-athletes, meaning there is no supervision in place to reduce the risk of infection or injury. Instead, kids are flooding non-school district facilities in our community for unsupervised workouts where masks are not worn, and where physical distancing is not practiced.

During a Nov. 12 press conference, the state reported that only 3% of high school student-athletes and coaches tested the previous day were positive for COVID-19 because they had followed established risk mitigation protocols, according to state epidemiologist Dr. Angela Dunn. "I can't believe I'm about to say this, but we should all start acting more like high school athletes," she said. We should take Dr. Dunn's advice, which recognizes that kids are safer in structured, school-based extracurricular programs where coaches and advisors have authority to enforce safety measures, and where students have added incentive to follow protocols that lower their risk of contracting COVID-19.

Our district's risk mitigation protocols are working. Currently, our entire district has reported fewer than a dozen confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our schools in the past 14 days. About 115 individuals district wide are quarantined due to contact with a positive case either in school or in our community. To put that in perspective, we have about 6,800 students and close to 1,000 employees, for a current confirmed case rate of 0.1% and a quarantine rate of 1.5%.

As a Board, we support regular testing for those involved in extracurricular activities, with parental consent for minors. We already have processes in place to effectively conduct testing under the state's low-risk test and return protocol, thanks to our close partnership with the TriCounty Health Department. We are also amenable to limits on the number of spectators for games and events held indoors. All we ask is that our students be allowed to return to competition in the sports they love and participation in the activities that keep them engaged.

Dr. Rick Woodford, Superintendent • **Jason Johnson**, CPA, Business Administrator
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Some may view extracurricular activities as less important than what takes place in the classroom. We assert, however, that classroom learning is amplified by involvement in extracurricular activities, where teamwork, goal setting, time management, problem solving, and leadership are taught and reinforced. We also know there are some kids in our schools who would stop attending were it not for the ability to participate in school sports, clubs, and activities.

Our kids – specifically our student-athletes, those in the performing arts, and those involved in clubs like FFA, FBLA and DECA – have borne the brunt of the state's response to the pandemic. A two-week school dismissal in March turned into months of remote learning and a loss of all spring sports and activities. Looking back now, it is clear the cancellation of spring sports and activities was unwarranted and had negative impacts on the academic, social, emotional, and physical well-being of our kids. We cannot allow this to happen again.

Sincerely,

Kurt Case
President

Robin McClellan
Vice President

Dave Chivers
Member

Sarah Lamb
Member

Harlan "Scoot" Wilkins
Member

cc: Lt. Gov. Spencer Cox
Sydnee Dickson, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction, Utah State Board of Education
Rob Cuff, Executive Director, Utah High School Activities Association
Richard Saunders, Interim Director, Utah Department of Health
Richard Stowell, President, Utah School Boards Association
Jordan Mathis, Health Officer, TriCounty Health Department
Sharon Shipton, Principal, Uintah High School
Bill Sivert, Athletic Director, Uintah High School

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