

February 5, 2021

The Honorable Kate Brown, State of Oregon Health Authorities, and Leaders of OSAA:

The Medford School District Board of Education is writing to express our urgent concern for our thousands of students who, due to COVID-19 restrictions, have lost many opportunities to participate in athletics and extracurricular activities. According to the National Federation of State High School Associations, four states in the entire nation have yet to play high school sports in the 2020-21 school year, including Oregon.

We have received dozens of letters with heartfelt pleas from families who are deeply worried for the mental health and wellbeing of their children without these opportunities. It has now been nearly a year since the COVID pandemic began and Oregon students continue to be some of the only students in the nation who cannot play, sing, or perform. We appreciate our state's continued dedication to "follow the science" and keep our communities safe. We believe following science should now lead to lifting some of the restrictions on athletics and activities, following in the footsteps of our neighbors in Washington State.

The Medford School District and other Oregon districts have shown that we can be effective in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 in our schools. We have successfully conducted limited in-person instruction since the fall. Data collected from other states that have engaged in contact sports this fall and winter are showing it can be done safely. We are concerned that without these activities our students are engaging with one another without supervision and in places where we cannot implement COVID safety measures.

Our families have expressed their willingness to sign liability waivers, if that were necessary, to get their children back on the playing field, on the court, and on stage. Please continue to follow the science and look to other states who are successfully allowing students to play and perform (with safety measures in place) for our students have lost too much already. It's time to let them play and perform!

Respectfully,

Medford School District Board of Directors, action approved at the February 4, 2021 meeting.



Jeff Kinsella, Board Chair  
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Jim Horner, Board Member  
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