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Re: Face Coverings for Students and Refs Participating in Basketball Practices and Games

The County of Lake is reaching out to you in hopes that we can better accommodate our youth (K-12) indoor sports for this upcoming winter season. We believe in keeping our children and all residents safe during this ongoing pandemic, however, we feel that masks being mandated for indoor sports, such as basketball, are a difficult if not detrimental request for our youth and referees to follow.

Both athletes and refs are required to run up and down the court continuously throughout practice and the four quarters of play during basketball season. Wearing a facial covering and sitting in a classroom is vastly different than wearing a facial covering and exerting an enormous amount of energy indoors. Due to the heavy breathing, sweating, and accelerated moisture build up created within a mask, mandating that athletes and refs wear facial coverings increases the potential for choke hazards as well as increased fatigue while they are playing. Basketball is a physical sport, and the potential for masks to be moved possibly impairing the vision of players or masks torn off falling on the ground creating a dangerous obstacle on the court are high. In attempting to reduce the hazards of COVID, mandating facial covering for basketball may increase other hazards to the physical well being of the players.

The California Department of Public Health has already approved for college athletes to play without facial covering, and we feel that the needs of our youth match the needs of our college athletes. It is important to have unobstructed breathing during cardio-vascular activities where sprinting from one end of the court to the other is what allows a basketball team to successfully compete against one another. We have all worn masks throughout the pandemic and have experienced at one time or another running up a flight of stairs or carrying heavy items exerting enough energy to make us realize that a mask and increased levels of exercise do not go hand in hand. Imagine playing an entire game of basketball? We are asking our youth to do the impossible.

We request that you approve for all athletes and refs on the court to remain without facial coverings for the duration of practice, the game, and the season with the caveat that testing is

mandatory twice a week to ensure that athletes and refs are not carriers of the COVID-19 virus during practice or a game.

We want to encourage our youth to participate in sporting activities as it is healthy for their mental and physical state. We believe that the precautions requested for you to approve would greatly reduce the potential for the spread of COVID and allow for our youth sports to be played at the highest levels of competition without restrictions to their abilities to play their best. It would also follow similar rules enacted for college indoor sports.

We hope that you will consider our request and revise your youth sports decision.

Respectfully,

Respectfully submitted,

Bruno Sabatier, Chair of the Board of Supervisors

cc: Dr. Gary Pace
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