



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

January 21, 2021

The Honorable J.B. Pritzker
Governor of Illinois
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Pritzker,

I write today, as follow up to previous communications from last summer, to request additional information on when high school sports will be able to resume throughout the State of Illinois. High school athletics play a critical role in the lives of our children, helping to teach valuable lessons and promote mental and physical well-being. As you are aware, the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) later this month will be meeting to address the playing of athletics this year. I urge you to expand your decision to include all high school winter, spring, and fall sports throughout the entirety of the state. IHSA can still set schedules for sports to take place for the remainder of the year, but they need further direction from you and your administration. The current designation of allowing sports based on tiered regions continues to limit athletic opportunities for the remainder of high school students across the state who want to play sports, along with their schools and coaches, in a safe and responsible manner.

Since your decision to halt contact sports here in Illinois, high schools in many other states around the country have successfully and responsibly undertaken their seasons, including schools in neighboring states like Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin, Missouri and Kentucky. In the absence of IHSA-sanctioned sports, Illinois students have unfortunately transferred to schools outside our state to play, shifted to club teams that simply travel outside our state to participate in games and tournaments, or unfortunately, have not had the opportunity to play altogether.

If "low risk and medium risk sports" that are played indoors have been deemed safe to resume, I am confident that schools and coaches, in consultation with local health officials and IHSA, can find ways to move forward responsibly with all sports. Advanced and timely guidance from your office on all winter, spring, and fall sports is necessary to ensure appropriate planning and safety measures can be met ahead of play resuming and not create further delay for students.

As a father of three boys who play sports year-round, I also know the importance that athletics play in a child's mental and physical health. For students who are unable, or do not have the means to find an alternative to their school team, the toll of not having athletics in their life can be difficult. I continue to hear from parents, coaches, and athletic directors across the 18th Congressional District of Illinois who have shared their extensive concerns about increased

depression, anxiety and other impacts on students that are unable to have physical or athletic outlets in their life. Our children have already missed the chance to play fall sports, and now those that play sports outside the narrow categories and limited tiered regions announced will continue to lose opportunities and time to play this spring. One year may not feel like a long time to an adult, however a year without sports for a teenager can seem like a lifetime. By not allowing them to participate, you are taking away critical athletic and educational opportunities.

We all have the best interest of our students and children at heart and it is time to reverse your position and allow high school sports to resume in full with appropriate safety measures. States around us have safely played high school athletics — laying out a roadmap for success — while we have sat on the sidelines. As COVID-19 positivity rates further decline around the state, I continue to ask that you release updated guidance, provide a comprehensive plan on reopening all sports state-wide, and empower local school districts and health officials to help determine what is best in their area. Thank you for considering this request and I ask for a timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Darin LaHood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Darin" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "LaHood".

Darin LaHood
Member of Congress