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Senate of Pennsylvania

July 30, 2020

Governor Tom Wolf
Office of the Governor
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf,

School sports provide an opportunity to enrich and enhance students' academic experience, offering a chance for students to apply the lessons they have learned both inside and outside of the classroom. Most people agree that students who participate in organized sports are more likely to have a positive outlook on their education, and these activities can act as a springboard for lifelong success once students leave high school.

As students begin preparations to compete in fall sports, the topic of allowing spectators to watch school athletic events has come to the forefront of discussion. It is my belief that the Commonwealth can safely permit spectators, parents, and family members to attend fall athletic events if proper mitigation measures are in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

School districts are preparing to re-open in the fall by creating plans following the initial guidance released by your administration. These plans include preparations for student athletes for the upcoming fall season. As these students prepare to compete, it is abundantly clear that plans for spectators could also be developed in order to safely enhance upcoming games or matches.

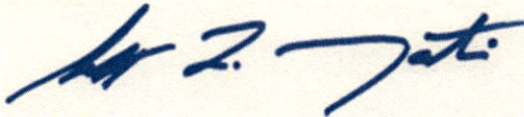
Many of the venues used in fall sports – such as tennis, field hockey and football – use large outdoor venues in which social distancing and other mitigation practices recommended by the CDC and the Pennsylvania Department of Health could safely and easily be employed. In addition, some sports may only have a small number of spectators that could spread around the field or stands without creating a potential risk to other spectators or student athletes.

Parents, guardians, family and friends provide a tremendous support structure for student athletes. Denying them the ability to be spectators – especially when safe plans could be developed – diminishes the experience both for the student athletes and the loved ones who played a significant role in their success. At a minimum, I believe safe spectator guidelines could permit parents and guardians to be in attendance to cheer on the young athletes to whom they have devoted countless hours of practice time and endless amounts of love and support.

If we can congregate together safely and responsibly in shopping malls, big box stores, indoor sports venues and outdoor car shows under the guidance of the Department of Health, then I see no reason why the Department cannot develop similar guidelines to give schools the ability to allow spectators to watch athletic events in a manner that is safe for both the athletes and the people there to cheer them on.

Schools continue to look to your Administration for guidance on safely reopening in the fall. As your administration works to provide this additional direction, I strongly encourage you to include guidelines allowing the safe attendance of spectators in any updated guidance you provide to school districts in the days and weeks ahead. I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Scott F. Martin". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Scott F. Martin
PA State Senator, 13th Senatorial District