

Greetings legislative members,

I am writing to share my support for the proposed amendment to HB 4212-10 to allow youth to play contact sports during Phase II of the COVID-19 pandemic response. I write this as a parent and a health advocate (I have spent 16 years teaching health education full-time at Chemeketa Community College).

I have four children, three of whom are old enough to play sports. I have a Master of Public Health Degree and have a good understanding of epidemiology, health promotion and the importance of primary prevention of disease. I also know and teach that health is not just physical. There are 8 dimensions of wellness to consider. This is something that every higher-level health class emphasizes to students. A person's health also includes emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual, occupational, environmental and financial factors. These dimensions of wellness interact with each other, and all are important to short-term health, long-term health and overall quality of life.

It is critical for health to be physically active. There have been numerous studies on this over the years. One large study suggested that physical inactivity is more harmful than smoking, diabetes and heart disease. ([Link here](#)). School-age children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day, [according to the CDC](#). Physical activity, including participation in athletics, can help a person fight [anxiety and depression](#). Regular physical activity can also help improve immune system and cognitive functioning, digestion, sleep, energy level, overall mood. It can reduce the long-term risks of heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis, diabetes and other chronic diseases. Athletics can help our kids in ways that go far beyond the field, gym or mat.

It was difficult for my three school-age children to not be able to play sports in the spring (basketball, baseball and soccer). We understood the importance at the time of needing to limit contact with others. With the fall approaching, I hope that my kids and youth around the state are able to play sports, including contact sports. There are ways that these sports can be taught to reduce risk of disease transmission. I urge you to consider this amendment. Not allowing kids to play the sports that they have played for years could be detrimental on their emotional and physical health. My 10-year old son has played tackle football for two seasons, and he has spent the last eight months waiting for the sport to start back. He has been training to stay in shape, and he, along with youth all around Oregon, can't wait to get back to practice. My 8-year old daughter is eager to play soccer, which she has played in the fall and spring since she was 4 years-old. My 6-year old son is looking forward to his second season playing flag football and his 4th season playing soccer.

Sports are a big part of my kids' lives. My husband and I encourage athletics because our children love to play and gain confidence with each season. They learn strength, both physical and mental. They understand, clearer than with any other activity, how to be a part of a team. They learn how to work with others and how to bounce back after defeat. They have learned to value hard work and commitment. These are valuable life lessons. Sports are important for physical health, but they have relevancy far beyond that.

Please consider the amendment to HB 4212-10 proposed by Representative Wallace to allow contact sports.

Thank you,

Raschel Larsen, MPH