

As a member of the Legislature representing all of Oregon's residents, I am asking you to voice your opposition to the Governor's office declaration that they will not review the policy to prohibit contact sports in Oregon any time soon. As a policy-maker, I believe the policies we enact should always be open to review based on any new information that may arise. This is especially true and necessary as it relates to those policies that have substantial negative impacts to some of our most vulnerable populations.

Kids are suffering mental and physical health issues, vital connections and relationships are being severed and precious opportunities and experiences are being squandered. There are also substantial equity concerns as these, and many other negative impacts are disproportionately affecting economically disadvantaged and communities of color as resource availability often prevents members of these communities from accessing alternative means of participation and engagement. With all of this occurring, are you willing to agree that the new information available doesn't even warrant even a cursory review to potentially prevent more irreparable harm from occurring unnecessarily? I know what my answer would be to my constituents. I hope yours is the same. Take time to review the data and please demand that the Governor and OHA defend the policies with data of their own that would justify the continuation of the policies that only a very small minority of states still deem necessary.

Data collected from the 38 states that engaged in contact sports this fall and winter are showing conclusively that it can be, and has been done safely. It is increasingly clear that the severe negative impacts experienced by kids in Oregon due to outdated policies is completely unnecessary. This is empirical data from real-life experiences, not from computer models and projections. The data from those models will show, for instance, that playing football is riskier than not playing football. But, it isn't anywhere near that simple nor binary of a choice. They don't take into consideration all of the other behaviors that will or will not take place when that choice is made that affect the overall risk scenario. Kids that are involved in supervised co-curricular activities are doing so with proper safety protocols, much better early detection and intervention, and they have the most effective motivation to stay safe outside of their supervised activities because they desperately want to continue to be able to engage in them. Kids that are not engaged in organized activities will still find ways to socialize, but they will do so in venues without the benefit of supervision or utilization of safety protocols. These facts are borne out again and again in study after study showing that allowing kids to play and engage in all co-curricular activities can actually lower case rates and further the goals of COVID-19 policies.

Some of the actual data coming out of venues that have allowed contact sports to be played during the COVID-19 pandemic:

The Michigan High School Athletic Association received its first update from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services since the new coronavirus antigen test was distributed to schools with remaining teams and athletes competing in fall sports. The initial report provides some positive news in the form of negative coronavirus test results. So far, the MDHHS reports that 99.6 percent of all coronavirus tests conducted among high school athletes since testing began on Dec. 30 have come back negative. <https://www.mlive.com/.../coronavirus-tests-for-michigan...> In Utah, working through medical professionals and school administrations, the state rounded up every player on all 16 remaining playoff teams and began to test. Of the 1,360 individuals tested, only a handful of positive cases emerged: 49, to be exact. In a controlled environment where

participants wanted something — in this case, the chance to play a sport they love — the spread of the virus was eight times lower than the public at-large. <https://www.ksl.com/.../the-statistics-behind-why-we-all...>

In a recent study by the University of Wisconsin researchers led by Dr. Andrew Watson surveyed 207 schools that restarted fall sports in September, representing more than 30,000 athletes, more than 16,000 practices and more than 4,000 games. The survey found 271 athletes contracted the virus overall compared with 2,318 Wisconsin children aged 14-17 over the month of September. No sports were found to have a higher incidence rate of COVID-19 overall than 14-17 year-olds in general. Of the 209 athletes who knew where they contracted the virus, only one case was attributed to participation in sports. None of the cases among the athletes resulted in hospitalization or death. <https://apnews.com/.../virus-outbreak-public-health...>

The following observations were made In an article published in the New York Times on November 13, 2020: Before the N.F.L. season began, one of the big questions the league faced was whether a close-contact sport like football, with 22 players on the field and dozens more on the sidelines along with coaches and trainers, could avoid a coronavirus outbreak stemming from a game. That has largely been answered: yes. League officials have said there is no evidence of players transmitting the virus on the field despite the close contact between teams, and there has been little transmission inside team facilities, where social distancing guidelines are in place. <https://www.nytimes.com/.../covid-nfl-fans-players.html>

This, above all, is a matter of responsible representation and policy-making. It is a tremendous disservice to those being adversely impacted to deny an honest evaluation of policies that have remained essentially unchanged since the beginning of this pandemic. Information and understanding of the virus and how it is transmitted has evolved dramatically and policy should follow the science and evidence as it evolves. These kids are watching and will understand the failure of their representation if they are denied these opportunities without a complete, honest and open review of the absolute necessity to do so. Please give this voice to the voiceless and restore some much needed confidence in our elected officials to these future generations.

On a personal note my husband has been coaching football and wrestling for the last 33 years in Salem. He has been the head football coach at South Salem for 25 years and is currently the head wrestling coach. His coaches and football kids have been working out and played 7 on 7 this fall. They have not had a COVID case traced back to the football program. This has been the overwhelming result from each and every coach that he has talked to through out the state. They (all players and coaches) are diligent in following protocols so that they can play. Please push for a review of this policy using all of the data that has been accumulated in all of the states that have allowed contact sports to take place. Our kids are dying out here, some literally. I run the Saxon Youth Football program. I have been working with a mom and her son whom is a 4th grader. He tried to suffocate himself because he “just wants to go back to school and play football.” I have many more stories that parents are sharing with both my husband and me. Too many to document for you. But think about what I shared, a 4th grader! We have to do something, you have to do something!

Sincerely,

AnneMarie Caldarazzo-DuFault