



August 15, 2020

Dear Governor Wolf and Director Lombardi,

We hope this letter finds you well. Our names are Meredith Reese, Topher Bishop, Ria Dietz, Isabella Donato, Christina Cappola, and Sofia Pejdic. We are swimmers that represent the athletes of Allegheny Mountain Swimming and Middle Atlantic Swimming, two of the 59 USA Swimming Local Swim Committees. Allegheny Mountain Swimming and Middle Atlantic Swimming consist of approximately 15,000 athletes, covering the entire state of Pennsylvania. Included in these 15,000 athletes are the many high school age swimmers who participate in their interscholastic swim programs. We are writing to you today with concerns surrounding the Governor's August 7th recommendation to postpone all youth sports until 2021. Athletes across Pennsylvania would be devastated if their seasons were put on hold. We need swimming during this time to provide a sense of normalcy and an opportunity to compete for all of our athletes.

We understand the grave importance of taking COVID-19 very seriously and doing our part to lower the curve, and we are in full support of maintaining social distancing. However, we believe that well-regulated swim training does not jeopardize the safety of our fellow citizens. We understand the possible necessity to halt high-contact youth sports, but swimming is different. According to the CDC, "there is no evidence that SARS-Cov-2... can spread to people through water..."<sup>1</sup>. All of our individual club teams within Allegheny Mountain and Middle Atlantic have trained following all of Pennsylvania's COVID-19 guidelines over the past three months and have been able to safely conduct practice by reducing practice sizes, monitoring the amount of swimmers in each lane, and maintaining six feet of distance at all times. Fortunately, none of us know of any fellow athletes who have tested positive for COVID-19. Swimming is a huge part of our lives: swimmers in our LSCs jump in the pool each morning before the sun rises to train hard and reach their goals. Our success in implementing these practice guidelines shows our

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<sup>1</sup> "Visiting Beaches and Pools." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1 July 2020, [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/beaches-pools.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/beaches-pools.html).

dedication to making sacrifices, especially in other parts of our lives, to stay in the water. While other athletes can train for their particular sport remotely, swimmers need pools. Therefore, we are asking the Governor to reconsider postponing *all* youth sports until 2021, because we believe swimming is safe and necessary.

Athletes that are serious about the sport use practice and training as a way to mentally stabilize their lives. With everything going on in such a crazy time, being able to practice and compete is vital to a young athlete's wellbeing. Many of our closest friends are on our club teams, mainly because we dedicate 15 plus hours every week to the sport we love, and athletes of all ages need to be surrounded by their peers, even in a socially distant environment. Attending practices and being surrounded by our teammates and coaches provides a sense of comfortable routine to a young swimmer. In this abnormal time, everyone needs at least one recurring activity to participate in. Taking away swimming would be devastating to the health and routine of the swimmers of Pennsylvania.

With all the hard work that our athletes put into this sport, it is absolutely vital that you look at and consider the adverse effects on taking away such a safe sport from such a motivated group of young athletes. We respectfully ask the Governor to reconsider his recommendation to postpone all youth sports until 2021.

Thank you for your time and consideration

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