

AARON J. BERNSTINE, MEMBER
10TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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July 31, 2020

Governor Wolf, Secretary Levine, and the PIAA Board of Directors,

The PIAA's most recent decision, regarding spectators' inability to attend school athletic events this fall, is deeply concerning, as it has the potential to have a significant negative impact on Pennsylvania's student athletes, their parents, and communities across the state.

On Thursday, July 30, the PIAA cited the Pennsylvania Department of Health's sport guidance for COVID-19, stating, "During the Yellow and Green phases of reopening, sports-related activities, at the pK-12 level, are limited to student athletes, coaches, officials and staff only."

As you well know, youth sports have important physical, social and emotional benefits to children of all ages. These student-athletes take great pride in sharing these experiences with their families; it is an important component that should not be underestimated. There are safe ways that parents would be able to watch their children's sporting events, and an effort should at least be attempted before a blanket statement like this is implemented statewide.

The full athletic experience leads to healthy habits, leadership and social development skills, self-esteem enhancement, lifelong positive decision-making and more. By eliminating spectators from school athletic events, the PIAA is creating negative impacts on our student athlete's well-being and self-esteem that will carry on through academics and adulthood.

Additionally, this decision has trickle-down effects on many community youth sports leagues, which have been forced to cancel their seasons entirely. These community teams rely on income produced by spectators and concessions to cover league expenses.

I have been contacted by many parents, coaches, and student-athletes who are rightfully upset and concerned about the negative impacts of this decision. School sports are a short-lived opportunity for our youth, and a proud time for thousands of Pennsylvania parents, families, and local communities. Our student athletes deserve to have their parents cheering them on in the stands, and parents deserve the short chance to see their children compete and grow.

I strongly urge the PIAA Board to reconsider this decision, and instead, develop innovative solutions to ensure child athletes can continue to reap the full benefits of team sport participation safely and with their parents, families and communities watching.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aaron J. Bernstine".

Aaron J. Bernstine
State Representative
PA House of Representatives
Legislative District 10