



## WSESD Regional Superintendents' Association

January 29, 2021

To Governor Gretchen Whitmer and Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS Director:

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to our state during this trying time. As the superintendents of the public schools in Lake, Mason, and Oceana counties, we are unified in our commitment to assure that the safety of our students remains our top priority. On behalf of our student-athletes and co-curricular activity participants, we are writing to inform you we believe winter contact sports and co-curricular activities can safely resume with strong mitigation strategies in place — including wearing masks. We are hopeful we can partner with you as soon as possible to provide these meaningful experiences for all of our students.

Our confidence in providing a safe experience for students stems from our ongoing relationship with both state and local health departments. By working together we have demonstrated that our staff and students can safely be in the classroom, engage in extracurricular activities, and compete in sports.

Throughout our communities and across our state we are seeing low or declining positivity rates. Late last week, our statewide positivity rates posted some lowest levels since fall contact sports were happening. The MDHHS pilot program for fall sports showed that nearly all student athletes tested negative, further supporting that our students are safe and able to participate in these activities. Additionally, other states who have successfully started or completed their seasons and events have provided evidence that it can be done safely. Schools are best positioned to provide structured and safe environments for competitions and performances.

Athletics and co-curricular activities are extensions of the classroom, and these activities provide valuable lessons that last a lifetime. Extracurriculars and athletics are integral to the emotional and physical well-being of our students. The safety and well-being of our students remains our top priority. If schools are unable to provide students the opportunity to participate in extracurriculars/ athletics in a controlled environment, our students will seek those opportunities in unsafe and uncontrolled environments. Forcing our students to seek alternate options further erodes the safety we can provide and it further divides our collaborative efforts as our students need and have illustrated that they require this mental health support.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to partnering with you to provide these opportunities for students.

Sincerely,

The Superintendents of the West Shore Superintendents' Association

- Rick Heitmeyer, Baldwin Community Schools
- Jamie Bandstra, Gateway to Success Academy
- Mark Platt, Hart Public Schools
- Jason Kennedy, Ludington Area Schools
- Jeff Mount, Mason County Central Schools
- Paul Shoup, Mason County Eastern Schools
- Dr. Scott Karaptian, Pentwater Public Schools
- Tim Reeves, Shelby Public Schools
- Dr. Tom Langdon, Walkerville Public Schools
- Dr. Jason Jeffrey, West Shore Educational Service District