



## OFFICE OF THE FIRST SELECTMAN

September 9, 2020

Office of Governor Ned Lamont  
State Capitol  
210 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Governor Lamont,

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Town of Harwinton and the Region #10 Lewis S. Mills football team to respectfully request your cooperation and leadership in resolving the cancelation of the youth/high school football programs across the State. I further ask that you convene a meeting with the Department of Public Health and the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference as soon as possible to address and facilitate the necessary policies and procedures so that youth football can proceed forward in accordance with your Reopen Connecticut Plan dated July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020, CDC guidelines for COVID-19 Youth Sports and CIAC's initial stance and collaboration with medical experts and DPH supporting playing 11 on 11 full contact football as stated on page 3, section 2 of the CIAC Fall Sports Plan dated August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (please see attached).

As you know engaging in sports has many benefits, and it is not all physical. Sports help our youth to create habits and healthy benefits that last well into their adulthood. Keeping our youth active through the COVID-19 pandemic, that has stricken this country with isolation, depression and increased mental health concerns, should be of the utmost importance for all of us. Adults and youths across the country have suffered from social isolation and decreased health benefits that sports and physical activity provides them. For some of our youth this is the only form of organized social and physical activity, and to take that away from them may result in further social and health issues down the road such as relationship building, team-sharing, cooperation and goal setting. Sports in general have been proven to be important in the psychosocial development of youth; teaching them discipline, respect for authority, persistence, dedication and patience as well as developing healthy self-esteem.

Over the last month, prior to the DPH/CIAC decision, which is in direct contradiction to the Connecticut Reopen Plan, I have attended and watched other youth sports programs with less gear, less physical distance and continual body to body contact such as soccer, baseball and softball. I have watched youth teams celebrate victories while wearing no masks or respecting the 6-foot distance. Yet, these sports continue to be encouraged with no COVID-19 spikes reported. The NFL plans to kick off their season this weekend with guidelines and restrictions for players playing for money rather than our youth who play for the love of the game and/or an opportunity to go to college. I ask, how is this fair?

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I could not send you this letter without possible ideas for guidance. Some of my suggestions are: Full face shields, gloves, 6-foot separation between players on sidelines, no huddle offense/defense, as well as spectator restrictions, etc. Other recommendations include screening and testing, isolation and exposure mitigation, disinfection of equipment after each use, no shared towels, water bottles, food or clothing. I highly recommend you review the NFL-NFLPA COVID-19 protocols so that our youth have guidance to save their season.

The DPH has blessed the Reopen Connecticut Plan as stated above. However, the knee-jerk reaction with no apparent thought or effort to create guidelines specific to football and no initial thought or collaboration with CIAC to create protocols that will ensure a season could start is disheartening and unfair. With the reopening of Connecticut schools, I understand that there is an increased fear of COVID-19 spikes but under your leadership and with the protocols in place we are thankful that COVID-19 still continues to be controlled here in our State. I truly understand the pressure you are under as Governor, as I have felt the same pressures, to a lesser degree, as a local elected official dealing with this pandemic and the back to back storms. However, we must find common ground and work together to bring normalcy back to Connecticut for the sake of our youth, the economy and the wellbeing of our residents.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and I want to assure you that I stand ready to help, assist and execute any plans put forth to resolve this situation and restore the 2020 football season.

Sincerely,

Michael R. Criss  
First Selectman, Town of Harwinton

Cc: CIAC  
DPH  
TAHD  
LSM Football

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