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February 1, 2021

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer
Governor of the State of Michigan
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Governor Whitmer:

On behalf of Berrien Spring Public Schools, we strongly encourage you to allow our student athletes to participate in winter sports.

We recognize that this pandemic has been difficult on everyone, notably our students. Many have been devastated to lose friends and loved ones; and the additional strain on their health has led to a dramatic rise in need for services, including physical and mental health.

Athletics has historically been an important part of a student's growth. Often, the friends and memories gained during athletic events last a lifetime. Sometimes we forget the role that sports play in developing young minds and bodies. Schools are busy places, and teachers are busy people, so it is the powerful influence athletics have on a student's ability to attend, regulate their emotions, and learn in the classroom setting that make it so critical.

We have proven at BSPS that sports can be safe and an important part of the development of our students. We strictly follow the guidelines and safety protocols because safety is paramount. As a district, we are committed to providing a rich educational experience; this commitment has not waivered during the pandemic. We have kept health and safety at the forefront of every decision we make. State government provided a safety template and entrusted schools to use it. **WE HAVE**. We encourage you to trust us, as professionals, that we can and will continue to make decisions that put our students' safety first.

We do not envy your role. As board members, it can often feel as if others are second guessing our decisions that we make on behalf of our students and community. Not everyone gets it right every time. We must put our trust in the trained professionals that operate our schools daily. We also must trust that they do and will continue to make the right decisions to put student safety as the highest priority. We also implore you to do the same.

Please trust us to make the decisions that are best for our community. Trust us to follow and keep the guidelines that have been developed to keep our students and staff safe. Trust us that our students will comply with Covid guidelines because they want to play. They need it and they deserve it.

Please let our students participate in winter sports. Let them play!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Paul Toliver, President of the Board of Education
Peg Bormann, Vice President of the Board of Education
Pat DeLong, Secretary of the Board of Education
Kim Keigley, Treasurer of the Board of Education
Eric Stoub, Trustee of the Board of Education
Sarah O'Dell, Trustee of the Board of Education
Berrien Springs Public Schools

Cc: State Representative Brad Paquette
State Senator Kim LaSata