

Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Ave.
Rockville, MD 20850

December 11, 2020

Dear Councilmembers:

I respectfully share with you the concern of thousands of Montgomery County families regarding the impact of Executive Order 139-20 on the welfare of our youth.

Under the sacrifices we have all made in response to the pandemic, families are left with the serious challenge of keeping our children and teenagers engaged in new routines that substitute the structure, social interaction and enjoyment they had in their lives before the pandemic. For many families in the county, at a time when their children are not going to school, youth sports have provided that critical link necessary for healthy development.

With COVID-19 cases on the rise again, I can understand the need as a community to respond. But we must be extremely vigilant in ensuring that the solution is not worse than the problem itself. At a time when youth are not going to school, 8-year-olds are not having play dates with their friends, and teens are spending a good part of their days in their rooms, it is imperative that we preserve the few critical tools families are relying on to keep their youth from losing interest.

I have two boys, aged 8 and 15, who play ice hockey. The efforts of the rinks, associations, and families in the DMV have produced incredible results in keeping the sport safe for the children. Mask mandates, no locker room use, limited capacity, special ingress/egress procedures, no spectators, and full team quarantine when one player has had close contact with a positive case are just some of the measures we've endured. As a parent, it's been difficult to wait in the car while our children are on the ice, especially since going to our child's game was once a treasured family affair. But at the end of the day, having our child engaged in sport and competition of some sort is what's most important.

By contrast, our 12-year-old daughter, who would normally be playing basketball by now, does not have that same opportunity. We wish we could change that for her, as we can clearly see at home through comparison the difference that outlet makes.

I strongly urge you to oppose Executive Order 139-20 in its current form, as it would effectively shut down the few remaining indoor sports that have a proven record of knowing how to keep going safely. I implore you to recognize that youth sports is an essential service that many Montgomery County families are using to keep their children interested and engaged. Youth sports are providing the one link to normalcy from which we families will build upon once the pandemic is controlled, and taking away will have devastating consequences. The reported increase in mental health issues among youth locally is alarming, and evidence that this holiday season may be a bleak one for many families. EO 139-20 in its current form will make things worse, not better.

Families, facilities and organizations have worked tirelessly to ensure certain outlets remain safe, and the results have been overwhelmingly successful. It would be irresponsible to take that away.

Respectfully yours,



Joe Serra
Bethesda, MD