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I am the parent of Spencer Adams, a Junior and football player at Northwest High School. I am writing in response to the new Montgomery County Board of Health Regulations issued on March 12, 2021, which limit play in our community to “low- and medium-risk sports.” As per the County’s website, football is a “high-risk” sport for Covid-19 transmission, so the new order effectively prohibits football play in Montgomery County.

I am writing to ask you to **please re-categorize football as a “moderate-risk” sport** if you are going to rely on categorizations at all, so that players across Montgomery County and the MCPS school district may play an abbreviated “fall” season, as planned. These athletes have waited patiently as the country collected data from new studies and the current decision does not follow current findings regarding how Covid is transmitted.

The county’s designation of football as “high-risk” is based on the Maryland’s Sports Commission’s June 2020 Return to Play Committee report. That categorization was based in turn on guidance from the National Federation of High School Associations, **published in May of last year**. The NFHS has since changed its guidelines. According to their updated statement of risk, the NFHS -- which *originated* the tiered categories of risk by sport -- has expressly repudiated its own prior guidance. **According to new guidance, it is inappropriate to categorize football as high-risk.**

Similarly, the American Academy of Pediatrics has issued updated guidance for returning to sports. The AAP warns against indoor contact sports like hockey and wrestling, but makes no mention of football. Instead, the AAP notes that “most transmission associated with outdoor sports has been related to off-field activities.” Rather, outdoor sports are deemed less risky than indoor sports -- many of which are deemed “medium-risk” by the county.

**The Montgomery County council must take immediate action** so that the county’s youth are not unfairly and adversely affected by reliance on obsolete guidelines that have been repudiated by those who first issued them in the first place. Additionally, there seems to be a sports bias where certain sports have been given preference without any CURRENT science to support that decision.

Football is an outdoor sport, and is therefore less risky than allowed indoor sports. Football is also a contact sport -- but no more so than soccer or field hockey. Football equipment is no longer shared, guarding against potential risks associated with shared equipment. And football players, like all youth athletes in Montgomery County, practice and play fully masked, offering a level of protection to players, coaches, and community members consistent with a safe return to play. Their emotional and physical health has taken enough of a beating, I hope that the county will not deal them the final blow for their 2020-2021 season. Especially when student athletes are playing football in all neighboring counties and states.

Can we count on your support? It would mean the world to our players and families. Please let me know, thank you.

Sincerely,  
/s/ Michelle J. Adams