



# **Letter to the Editor: Governor Pritzker, The Mississippi Valley Conference Needs Your Help!**

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**The Honorable JB Pritzker**

**Office of the Governor**

**207 State House Springfield, IL 62706**

**February 3, 2021**

**Dear Governor Pritzker,**

Thank you for your work to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 and the continued vaccination of Illinois residents. As school district leaders, we are committed to helping Region 4 and the entire state achieve Phase 4, while assisting in the vaccination of our communities. We appreciate the guidelines for low, moderate, and high risk sports to practice, scrimmage, and compete.

These guidelines provide hope for our students and our families to see athletics return this school year. However, regardless of our efforts, Region 4 may not achieve or maintain Tier 1 or Phase 4 due to ICU bed availability and the positivity rate, which means our student athletes could miss out on the opportunity to play sports during the second semester, and our families could miss out on watching their children participate, for some the last year of high school.

As advocates for the well-being of our students, we are suggesting additional mitigation strategies to ensure our student athletes have the opportunity to, not only practice, but scrimmage and compete, providing a sense of normalcy during exceptional times. MVC superintendents are committed to following the guidelines set forth by both the IDPH and IHSA if it means our student athletes have the same opportunities to compete.

We appreciate your administration's efforts to curb the spread of the virus, but please be aware our Region 4 hospital systems serve not only our residents, but also residents outside of our region. Patients from across the river in Missouri and counties outside of Region 4 have negatively impacted our ICU bed availability, inflating our overall numbers.

As a result, school districts outside of Region 4 will be competing in the weeks ahead, while sending patients to our community health systems and negatively impacting our students' opportunity to compete, denying equitable opportunities for our student athletes. Since the pandemic began, families that could afford club sports have and continue to provide their children extra-curricular activities in basketball, soccer, volleyball, and wrestling in Illinois and neighboring states. However, the cost itself denies the same opportunity for all families.

GoFundMe is one example of how communities have helped ensure students were given the opportunity to play because the cost of club sports was too expensive for families. Sadly, absent of this type of support, students are being denied equitable opportunities provided in our public high schools and middle schools during a normal school year.

As an advocate for families of all income levels, we know you would desire a more equitable solution. Throughout the pandemic school districts have provided a safe environment for our students. This has occurred for high school graduation, in-person learning, and fall athletics.

We are asking for the same opportunity for not only basketball and volleyball, but the entire list of winter and spring sports, so we can provide our students a viable physical and mental outlet during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Governor Pritzker, the Mississippi Valley Conference needs your help!

**Mascoutah School District Dr. Craig Fiegel**, Superintendent Representing 1140 Students Athletes and their families

**Highland School District Mike Sutton**, Superintendent Representing 1100 Students Athletes and their families

**Triad School District Leigh Lewis**, Superintendent Representing 1162 Students Athletes and their families

**Jerseyville School District (Region 3 Phase 4) Brad Tuttle**, Superintendent Representing 1,312 Students Athletes and their families

**Bethalto School District Dr. Jill Griffin**, Superintendent Representing 1326 Students Athletes and their families

**Waterloo School District Brian Charron**, Superintendent Representing 1474 Students Athletes and their families

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