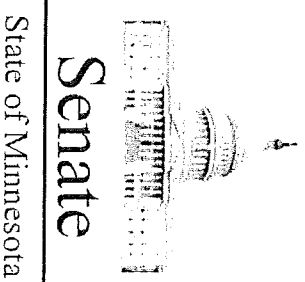


SENATOR KARIN HOUSLEY
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April 1, 2021

The Honorable Tim Walz
Governor of Minnesota
130 State Capitol
75 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd St. Paul, MN 55155

Governor Walz:

I am writing to you today to request clarity on COVID protocol requirements for our youth/high school sports. Last week, the Hill-Murray boys hockey team played against White Bear Lake to secure a spot to the state hockey tournament. Unfortunately, there was an alleged COVID exposure during that game, forcing the Hill-Murray team into quarantine a week before the tournament was scheduled to begin on Wednesday, March 31.

In an attempt to find an alternate date and venue for the game, the Hill-Murray team presented a plan to play the opening match one day later on Thursday, April 1. Their opponents from Wayzata agreed to the proposed changes, and even the Minnesota Department of Health approved the plan. However, the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) said they would not approve the team to play, citing their postseason guidelines. As a result, the team was unable to play in the first game of the State tournament and was ultimately forced to forfeit their spot in the tournament.

When the team found out about the possible positive COVID test, school officials spent days reviewing statutes and orders to ensure they were adhering to proper guidance and protocol. They even met with health department officials to review the video from the game. It was ultimately found that the infected player had close contact for no more than four seconds with any one player, while wearing a facemask.

Hill-Murray was provided one alternate option from the MSHSL—to play only “with eligible student athletes who are not subject to quarantine.” Since Hill-Murray’s junior varsity team had already ended its season, this was not a viable option.

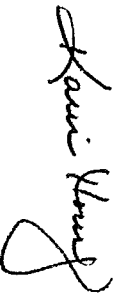
This is an upsetting situation—kids have already faced over a year of uncertainty. School and sports were on hiatus for so long, many of these kids were excited to be back on the ice, and even more excited when they qualified for the state tournament, just to have it ripped away from them. What's even worse is that our youth sports programs have suffered from a lack of consistent recommendations regarding COVID protocol, and our kids have been left to suffer.

I am urging you to work with MSHSL to ensure there is a fair and public process for MSHSL to partake in when making these potentially season-ending decisions. There should be standard recommendations that span all youth sports, instead of allowing certain sports to be treated differently. Finally, if alternate routes exist for kids to finish out their seasons safely, those should be given consideration, even if it means implementing a strategy for allowing rapid tests to be done on athletes the morning of games.

As a hockey mom, I know how much these sports and tournaments mean to our kids, and it is heartbreaking to see their dreams crushed so easily. I have asked Senator Roger Chamberlain, chair of the Senate Education Committee, to have a hearing on this issue, and he has agreed that a hearing is necessary to further understand MSHSL's decision making process.

I will also be requesting a meeting with the Board of MSHSL, and I hope you will consider joining in on the discussion. It is my hope that you will use your position to demonstrate fairness to our sports and our kids, as they have suffered enough throughout this pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karin Housley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Karin Housley
State Senator
District 39

CC: Minnesota State High School League Board President Blaine Novak

