



STATE OF MINNESOTA

Office of Governor Tim Walz
Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan

130 State Capitol ♦ 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. ♦ Saint Paul, MN 55155-1611

April 13, 2021

Senator Karin Housley
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3217
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Senator Housley:

I write in response to your April 1 letter to Governor Walz about COVID-19 exposure and the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL). The Governor extends his sympathy to impacted students for missing out on the opportunity to compete in the state championship. As a former teacher and coach, it has been difficult for him to hear the many stories like this one, where COVID-19 has kept students from participating in milestone events they had been building toward for years. That said, we remain steadfast in our commitment to following the best public health recommendations, especially when we have made progress toward ensuring students remain in the classroom for in-person learning; a goal I hope you also share.

As you identify in your letter, the role of our administration with youth and adult sports and COVID-19 is to provide guidance that leagues and teams are responsible for implementing. In addition to the COVID-19 Organized Sports Practice and Games Guidance for Youth and Adults, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has also provided more specific guidance related to quarantines in the context of school sports.

Throughout the course of the pandemic, state agency leaders, including those from MDH and Minnesota Department of Education, have been in close contact with MSHSL to provide advice and assistance in implementing state guidance to limit the spread of COVID-19 in high school sports. After learning of a potential sports exposure, MDH has provided assistance implementing the guidance and assessing the situation to help leagues and teams determine whether a close contact has occurred.

In the instance referenced in your letter, MDH followed this standard process and delivered its quarantine recommendations to the Minnesota State High School League and the Hill-Murray hockey team as it would in any other similar situation. MDH depends on sports leagues to evaluate these recommendations, along with their own policies and guidelines, and make the final determination about whether to require quarantine for an athlete or group of athletes.

I would also emphasize that the MSHSL operates as a nonprofit association outside the executive branch of state government. Minnesota Statutes 2020, section 128C.01, establishes the Minnesota State High School League as a nonprofit corporation that is a voluntary association of high schools and defines its governing board. The Governor appoints four of the board's 20 members while the remaining 16 are selected in accordance with league bylaws or appointed by the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals. It is beyond the role of our

administration to second-guess MSHSL's operational decisions relating to the re-scheduling of tournament games or eligibility of junior varsity replacements.

We appreciate MSHSL's work to implement recommended public health measures this past year to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The Governor and I again join in extending sympathy to the members of the Hill-Murray boys hockey team and others whose state championship aspirations have been cut short by COVID-19.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CS', is positioned above the typed name and title.

Chris Schmitter
Chief of Staff

