

April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Senator Housley,

Our daughter, Lauren, was on the 2020/21 Centennial Girls High School hockey team. With COVID 19 the season was challenging in many ways, but through it all Lauren just wanted to play. In order to play, Lauren understood and followed the rules that were laid out and so did her teammates. They wore their masks, they arrived 15 minutes before games and they kept their distance from their teammates, before, in between periods and after games. A typical season would include events such as community outreach (making blankets for Children's Hospitals), pasta feeds which help the girls feel united and also patronize local businesses. All of these events were taken away from the girls for fear of exposure to COVID.

I understand hockey is just a game, however it is also a way of life. Lauren plays hockey year round because she loves the game and strives to be her best. This season the Centennial Girls Hockey Team played their hearts out and Lauren was finally part of a team that achieved what every young hockey player in Minnesota dreams of...qualifying for the State Tournament. The tournament that is on tv, the tournament that so many in MN wait all season to watch. It brings together the best 8 teams in each class together to compete for the ultimate goal of all girls and all teams, to be State Champions.

When the team won the section 5AA championship, they were on an all time high. They had a photo shoot, the team bought State tournament apparel and they were anxiously awaiting the moment they would take the Xcel Energy Center ice.

Instead of all of these dreams becoming a reality, the team was told 4 days before they were to take the ice there was a positive case on the team and they would be unable to play.

What were the impacts??? Inconceivable tears – the girls who were on the zoom call with the principal and our AD could not contain themselves. When I got home I found Lauren crying, and repeating it's just not fair. All I could do was hug her and agree with her. It was not fair, it was a situation that defies logic. Why does one positive case stop everyone from playing? Why couldn't we test and play if the remaining players were negative?

We want our kids to be involved in sports or other activities because it allows them to develop leadership, work ethic and social skills that are essential to their growth. As of now, that is being taken away from them and sometimes when their dreams are about to be realized. All season there were postponed games, cancelled games due to COVID exposure or positive cases. I don't know the exact statistics, but I don't believe this disease impacts kids 18 and under very much. I want to see the restrictions lifted from youth sports as they are today. Players are following the rules with mask wearing social distancing to prevent the spread of the disease. That should be enough. If there is a positive case – they are already protected – so penalties against the kids of this age are unnecessary and defy logic.

Sincerely,

Matt O'Hara

