

April \_\_, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader and Minority Leader,

Thank you for your leadership in these trying times. While the immediate effort needs to be on saving lives and the stabilization of our economy and jobs, and there is more to be done there, we also need your leadership to begin thinking about the recovery process.

One area that has been dramatically disrupted by this crisis is youth sports. Youth sports offer a multitude of positive benefits to participants, including physical, social, emotional and cognitive perks, that extend far beyond the playing field.

- Some 60 million youth in this country are registered participants in organized youth sports programs.<sup>1</sup>
- Youth sports is an estimated \$19 billion industry.<sup>2</sup>
- Sports participation has a greater association with lower school dropout rates than any other activity.<sup>3</sup>
- Physically active adolescents are more likely to like to go to school, graduate from high school, and have a higher GPA.<sup>4</sup>
- Regular participation in sports can improve health factors and prevent obesity, chronic diseases, and other health problems.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Council of Youth Sports. Sports Participation Data.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2019/12/26/1964575/0/en/Youth-Sports-Market-Projected-to-Reach-77-6-Billion-by-2026-Comprehensive-Industry-Analysis-Insights.html>

<sup>3</sup> Rosewater, A. (2009). *Learning to play and playing to learn: Organized sports and educational outcomes*. Prepared for Team Up for Youth: Oakland, CA.

<sup>4</sup> Barber, B.L., Stone, M.R., & Eccles, J. (2003). *Adolescent Participation in Organized Activities*. Washington, DC: ChildTrends.

<sup>5</sup> Van Mechelen, W., Twisk, J., & Kemper, H. (2002). The Relationship Between Physical Activity and Physical Fitness in Youth and Cardiovascular Health Later on in Life. *International Journal of Sports Medicine*, 23, S1-S50.

- Youth who frequently attend afterschool programs, like sports programs, have less substance abuse, less misconduct, and are less aggressive than their peers who do not attend afterschool programs.<sup>6</sup>
- Underserved Communities Lack Access to Youth Sports -- In 2018 33.4% of kids ages 6 -12 from homes with \$25,000 or less were physically inactive, compared to just 9.9% of kids from \$100.000+<sup>7</sup>
- Athletes learn resilience that is taught naturally through sport; specifically, in dealing with the *feelings* of personal: loss, failure, adversity and mistakes.<sup>8</sup>
- Physical inactivity impacts national security. According to the Pentagon, 27% of young Americans are too overweight to qualify for military service. This gap will only widen if sports are eliminated.<sup>9</sup>

As this crisis persists, the infrastructure of youth sports, from running programs, providing coaching, and hosting events and competitions is eroding. We must provide critical support now to the youth sports community so these programs can remain for our youth as the crisis wanes.

## Youth Sports Relief Fund

While not unique to youth sports, coronavirus-response-resulting cancelled events and programs have had a significant impact on the youth sports sector. This economic loss applies to the youth sport program providers, particularly sports based youth development program serving at risk youth who need these opportunities the most, and youth sport event organizers, including the event hosts and a large number of employees and contractors connected to the event.

While the CARES Act funding made available to non-profits and businesses will be helpful in stabilizing youth sports organizations, additional assistance is needed. We are calling on you to help to address this economic and job destabilizing issue by creating an **economic stabilization fund of \$8.5B for youth sports providers.**

### The Need for Funding:

- **Prolonged Program Closures:** The economic impact on youth sports will extend longer than many sectors of our economy. Unlike many sectors, youth sports are seeing a near

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<sup>6</sup> Reisner, E., Vandell, D.L., Pechman, E.M., Pierce, K.M., Brown, B.B., & Bolt, D. (2007). *Charting the benefits of high-quality after-school program experiences*. Policy Studies Associates, Inc.: Washington DC.

<sup>7</sup> [https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2019/10/2019\\_SOP\\_National\\_Final.pdf](https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2019/10/2019_SOP_National_Final.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2563797/>

<sup>9</sup> Ready, Willing and Unfit to Serve. <http://cdn.missionreadiness.org/NATEE1109.pdf>. Accessed May 21, 2019

complete shutdown. Youth sports, by its nature, are a group and crowd-generating activity. While other sectors can operate by remote operations and limiting contacts, that is not feasible with youth sports. Procedures will need to be developed to safely allow the sports sectors to return to full operation, given the contact and crowd generating nature of youth sports. This could necessitate an extended period of shutdown across the youth sports industry before activities can resume.

- **Unique Structure.** Many youth sports organizations will not qualify for some of the protections under the CARES Act such as the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) because of the unique structure of how youth sports organizations operate. Youth sports organizations are largely run by volunteers, contractor and seasonal coaches, not employees. However, to support their workforce, youth sports programs still have operational costs including training, background screening, programmatic planning, and member support services. These costs continue even while youth sports programs remain closed.
- **Devastating financial losses.** Unlike other industries, under the current social distancing rules, youth sports are not happening and thus many youth sports organizations have seen their entire revenue stream stop, particularly their membership fees/dues which are essential to program operations. Furthermore, many youth sports programs, especially the nonprofits, are particularly reliant on corporate and philanthropic giving. Much of that support often comes from local restaurants and other business who are no longer able to give and probably will not be for quite some time.

In just the youth sports sector, we estimate that there have been approximately \$8.5B in losses due to coronavirus-response-related event cancellations. The force majeure clause of insurance contracts does not cover pandemics, meaning that most of the expenses related to these cancelled events are not reimbursable or insurable, leaving a potentially crippling loss. Similar losses are faced by venues scheduled to host these events that no longer can due to government restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic. The loss revenue will have a reverberating impact on airline, hotel and transportation sectors while also hitting the economic impact of local tourism (e.g. restaurants, taxis/transportation gig workers, facility rentals) resulting in further job erosion.

### **The Goals of the Fund**

For these reasons, we are asking that Congress recognize this reality by extending existing CARES Act programs and creating a \$8.5B stabilization fund for the youth sports sector. Organizations that can demonstrate that national health guidelines prevent their return to program, events, and general operations for an extended period will be able to apply for this funding to continue to provide the stabilization needed to keep their critical youth sports programs operational.

Youth sport providers can apply to be reimbursed for lost expenses from the coronavirus including loss of youth sports programming, camps & clinics, funding for employee and contractual-related expenses needed to continue operations (beyond the allowable period of the CARES Act,) and competition and event cancellations that are non-refundable or insurable due to the National Emergency nature of the cancellation.

This designated fund for youth sports providers will extend to all youth sports programs, organizations, and providers including sports-based youth development organizations, interscholastic sports programs, youth sports providers such as coaches, trainers, and instructors, and youth sport event providers. Priority consideration in the disbursement of these funds will be given to programs serving under-served communities such as girls, youth with disabilities and at-risk youth.

## **Youth Sports Recovery Program**

As we look ahead and start to plan for our Nation's recovery, there are specific efforts that should be included for youth sports. Youth sports will not be the same following this pandemic. We will need to adapt our policies, protocols, and even equipment to deal with that new reality. An investment in recovery should include an investment to ensure the safety and the quality of youth sports in this country.

In addition to the \$8.5B relief funding, Congress should create a youth sports recovery program, that will:

1. Create a Youth Sports COVID-19 Task Force to establish guidelines and protocols for the safe return and continuation of youth sports programs. This federal task force will include representative of the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, Housing and Urban Development, and Commerce, and key leaders in youth sports. This task force will develop youth sports policies, protocols, and practices to adapt to risks of contagions, such as this coronavirus, in youth sports settings, the adoption of those by youth sports organizations, and the purchasing of the necessary equipment, such as sanitation stations, needed to carry them out.
2. Fund existing grant programs along with funding new programs to support youth sports organizations and providers in implementing the new protocols of the Task Force. This will include, but is not limited to support to implement new policies, protocols, and practices, including the purchase of the equipment needed for implementation at practices and sporting events.

## **Conclusion**

The youth sports sector plays a critical role in our economy and the development of our youth but has faced particularly severe consequences as a result of the coronavirus crisis and resulting national emergency. For these reasons, crucial additional steps need to be taken to stabilize the industry and invest in recovery.

Sports Save Lives. Help us Save Youth Sports.

We, the undersigned organizations, support these recommendations and offer our expertise and support to work with you to execute this plan.

A World Fit For Kids!  
Adaptive Sports Program of Ohio  
Alabama State Games  
America SCORES  
American Volleyball Coaches Association  
Athletx Sports Group  
Atlanta Performance Volleyball  
Barber Elite Soccer  
Baseball Done Right LLC  
Baseball For All  
Baseball Youth  
Bay State Games  
Birmingham United Soccer Association  
Blue Sky Sports Center  
Bluegrass Sports Commission  
Brazas Futebol Club  
BVB International Academy  
Campbell County Convention & Visitors Bureau  
Capital City Juniors  
Carolina Region of USA Volleyball  
Champion Women  
Club One AZ Volleyball  
CoachSafely Foundation  
Community Rowing, Inc.  
Connect Sports  
Connecticut Sports Management Group, Inc.  
Crush South Volleyball Club  
CTX Ability Sports  
Dale City Track Club  
Dive San Diego  
DREAM  
Dugout Northbrook Baseball/Softball Academy  
Equality League

Enterprise Select Soccer Club  
Florida Region of USA Volleyball, Inc.  
FVB Umpires Association  
Game Day USA  
Garden Empire Volleyball Association  
Girls On The Run International  
Great Lakes Adaptive Sports Association  
GRB Academy  
Gulf Coast Region of USA Volleyball  
i9 Sports Corporation  
Illini Elite Volleyball  
Illinois Ability Sports  
Iowa Sports Foundation  
Koa Sports League  
League of Fans  
Leveling the Playing Field, Inc.  
Limestone Volleyball Club  
Michigan Sports Alliance  
National Association for Health and Fitness  
National Center for Safety Initiatives  
National Congress of State Games  
National Council of Youth Sports  
NorCal Premier Soccer  
North Country Region - USA Volleyball  
Perfect Game  
Pioneer Region of USA Volleyball  
Playworks  
PONY Baseball and Softball  
Pop Warner Little Scholars  
Premier Girls Fastpitch, Inc.  
PRIME Soccer Club  
Privit  
Rank One Sport & Rank One Health  
Rawlings Tigers  
Real Volleyball Academy LLC  
Rock Sports Group  
Rockey City Volleyball Club  
Roller Skating Association International  
RSL-AZ North  
RSL - AZ South  
Saint Vrain FC  
Share Winter Foundation  
Slammers LLC  
Softball Youth

South Mississippi Soccer Club  
Sports and Social Change  
Sports Endeavors, Inc.  
SportsEngine  
Sports Performance Volleyball Club  
Sunflower State Games/Kansas Senior Games  
Teammate Basketball  
TeamSnap  
The Alliance of Social Workers in Sports  
The Squash and Education Alliance  
The State Games of Oklahoma  
Trailblazers Volleyball Club  
Triple Crown Sports  
TropheCase  
Up2Us Sports  
U.S. Lacrosse  
U.S. Soccer Foundation  
USA Field Hockey  
USA Football  
USA Roller Sports  
USA Volleyball  
USA Wrestling  
VERSUS  
Vestavia Hills Soccer Club  
vFormity  
Virginia Amateur Sports, Inc.  
Volley One Academy Inc.  
Wausau Central Wisconsin Sports Authority  
We Coach  
Willowbrook-Burr Ridge Sports Performance Center LLC  
Wisconsin - Badger State Games  
Youth Baseball Nationals  
Youth Runner Magazine  
Youth Softball Nationals  
Youth Sports Collaborative Network  
Youth World Series