



Monday, January 25th, 2021

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer
Governor of Michigan
George W. Romney Building
111 S. Capitol Ave.
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Governor Whitmer:

Ice hockey is one of several Winter contact sports required to endure an extended pause in activity, as the state of Michigan continues to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Our Michigan hockey community is comprised of a passionate, driven collection of nearly 50,000 participants – including athletes, coaches, officials, facility managers, employees and volunteers. As the state governing body for ice hockey in Michigan, and an affiliate of USA Hockey, the Michigan Amateur Hockey Association (MAHA) is committed to prioritizing the safety and well-being of its 50,000 statewide participants. It is through this commitment, as well as the ongoing resiliency of our statewide membership, that we implore you to reconsider your recent extension of our athletic pause, allowing us to conduct an immediate, safe return to hockey activity in Michigan.

Participation in ice hockey can be a very low risk activity. Throughout our navigation of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, we successfully developed protocols to ensure the safety and well-being of ice hockey participants and spectators, allowing ice rinks to safely re-open for hockey activity. It was designed with the recommendations of the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services, as well as your Executive Orders. Furthermore, in conjunction with the U.S. Ice Rink Association and U.S. Figure Skating, USA Hockey has supported our efforts with a comprehensive [‘Returning to the Rinks’](#) document, containing guidelines and recommendations that have been successfully put into practice by many of our USA Hockey affiliates nationwide. This provides us a path for our athletes to safely practice and compete, while minimizing risks tied to COVID-19.

Rinks and facilities throughout Michigan serve as critical partners in the MAHA mission, in order to provide a safe, best-in-class athletic experience. Like many businesses throughout the state, the financial impact on local ice rinks has been catastrophic. Unfortunately, many of these facilities may not survive the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite our empathy for the financial strain endured by the rink operators, the MAHA has prohibited its membership from engaging in any activity that violates any Executive or Epidemic Orders, as well as the direction of your 2020 Michigan Safe Start Plan. Once re-opened for activity in September 2020, however, our hockey community showed its resolve as well as its commitment to a safe return for athletes. The [risk mitigation strategies](#) provided by USA Hockey, combined with the safety measures instituted by the MDHHS and your office, have given us our safe path to athletic activity while remaining compliant with COVID-19 protocols. Given your legal approval, we will commit to maintaining these best practices as they are mutually beneficial to all participants, as well as the local rinks.

As I’m sure you’re aware, ice hockey has a very proud history in Michigan. Our statewide hockey community remains a strong, passionate collection of participants and families. Many of our coaches, officials, and volunteers were raised on the principles associated with the game. In addition to athleticism, those principles include commitment, discipline, problem-solving, teamwork, and overcoming adversity. Through these principles, we set the example for the next generation, using ice hockey as our vehicle. Furthermore, we have used these principles to navigate a safe return to hockey activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. With this in mind, we emphatically request that you reward our commitment to these principles by allowing the Michigan hockey community to resume regular activity, effective February 1st.

We sincerely thank you for your consideration, as well as your continued leadership. Please note that the MAHA President George Atkinson, and its legal counsel Steven F. Stapleton of Clark Hill PLC, are eager to meet with you or your staff to discuss the reopening.

Respectfully,

George Atkinson - President
Michellina Jesue - Executive Vice President
Judy Niemi - Vice President, Officiating
Larry Johnson - Vice President, Adult Hockey
Roger Mauritho - Vice President, Youth Hockey
Gordon Bowman - Vice President, Coaches

Richard Frescura - Vice President, Appeals
Jean Laxton - Vice President, Girls / Women’s Hockey
Kerin Wear - Secretary
James Cosgrove - Treasurer
Robert Yohe - Michigan Registrar
Jason Reynolds - Director of Operations & Marketing