

# LET THEM PLAY *in Oregon!*

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## Lobbying/Advocacy Platform & Strategy

### We Want Equity

Stated policy goal of State of Oregon Equity Framework in COVID-19 Response and Recovery

**- Governor Brown prioritizes equity in all statewide responses to the crisis to protect and support our historically and currently underserved and under-resourced populations. On the path to recovery, it is imperative that all state agencies prioritize equity in their recovery policies and practices. Culturally specific and responsive strategies are critical to advance equitable outcomes for all Oregonians.**

Sports and activity prohibition disproportionately affects urban, poor and at-risk kids.

Much evidence points to sports and extracurricular activities being essential drivers of upward social mobility which is critical to both building networks and community resources for underserved communities. Negative educational outcomes disproportionately affect urban and poor communities when these activities are unavailable to them.

Urban, poor and at-risk kids generally have less ability to access options beyond publicly-funded school activity programs. Pay to play programs will not be financially feasible for many of these families to access, resulting in no options to participate in these programs available to them.

Economically disadvantaged families rely more heavily on scholarship programs to receive secondary educational opportunities. As more states open up their high-school sports programs, Oregon athletes will be disadvantaged by the loss of exposure and scholarship opportunities.

People that are not engaged college or professional sports are being treated disparately from those engaged in them. Arguments of resource availability to pay for mitigation measures have been given for this disparate treatment. This is a clear example of a defined group allowed preferential treatment over another because of their economic advantage. A stated goal of equity in this state is to enact policies to eliminate this sort of bias and ensure equal opportunities to those that are economically disadvantaged. This is a policy that does the exact opposite.

## **We Want Mental Health Benefits**

**Suicide was the second leading cause of death for Oregon residents aged 15 to 24 and the third leading cause of death for children aged 5 to 14. Oregon prioritized the mental health needs of this community by passing new laws in 2019 such as Adi's Act which required all Oregon school districts to develop comprehensive suicide prevention policies and a law to allow students to take up to 5 excused absences in a 3-month period for mental reasons. A significant portion of the additional \$1 billion allocated to Oregon's schools was mandated to be spent on improving student's mental and behavioral health.**

**The current Phase 2 guidelines prohibiting the engagement in certain activities indefinitely by these kids will directly frustrate and reverse progress made in these stated policy goals and state priorities.**

Surging reports of kids feeling hopeless, depressed, anxious even suicidal as isolation and prohibitions on chosen activities continue. Further isolation from teammates, coaches, mentors and the activities they love will continue to exacerbate this problem.

These kids are in mourning and they feel helpless to do anything about it. The very activities that gave them feelings of empowerment, pride, accomplishment and confidence are now being taken away without them having any say in the matter. The positive feelings sports/activities gave them is being replaced with feelings of helplessness, despair, and loss of control of their lives.

These policies will expand what is already a mental health crisis with our kids and that expansion will almost certainly eclipse the illness, suffering and death in this group caused by COVID-19.