

November 24, 2020

Governor Ned Lamont  
State Capitol  
210 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Governor Lamont and Commissioner Lehman:

In light of the recent restrictions placed on team sports by the state of Connecticut, the following Connecticut ice rink owners and operators are writing to respectfully ask that the new restrictions applicable to ice hockey be modified or clarified to ensure that ice rinks in Connecticut are able to continue to safely operate and stay in business. While we share in the state's goal to keep the residents of Connecticut safe and healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic, we do not believe the newly implemented restrictions on ice hockey accomplish this and only put the state's ice rinks at risk of going out of business.

First, we want to provide some background on the safety measures rinks and hockey players have taken during the COVID-19 pandemic. While we understand you are trying to limit the spread of COVID-19 through youth sports, during the COVID-19 pandemic, hockey has proven to be one of the safest indoor recreational activities for our youth. Unlike enclosed gymnasiums, indoor ice rinks require outside air exchange, dehumidification, and air quality monitoring. Hockey never has skin to skin contact as players are completely covered in protective equipment. USA Hockey has also sanctioned hockey for the 2020-21 season and medical experts have confirmed that with taking appropriate precautions, it is indeed safe to play hockey during the COVID-19 pandemic. The ice rinks and hockey players in Connecticut have implemented all mandated and recommended safety measures, including the wearing of face masks during play by all, and have worked diligently to make rinks as safe as possible for all of their patrons.

Some of the many safety precautions the rinks have implemented include taking temperatures at entrances before any patron is able to enter. Ice rinks have eliminated locker room usage, as well as limiting hockey bags, food or spectators in the building. Players dress at home and only lace up their skates upon arriving at the rink with the proper social distancing protocols in place. Ice hockey players never share the same equipment and do not touch the puck. Once on the ice, players, coaches and referees wear masks and any close contact is very limited, if at all. Players also wear a clear polymer face shield.

The game of ice hockey is played on the largest playing surface of all indoor team sports - 17,000 square feet (a basketball court is 4,200 square feet, as a comparison). Hockey is played 5 on 5 with a goalie on each side - 12 players on a 17,000 square foot sheet of ice. The average shift is around 40 seconds. There are typically 10 players on the bench rotating 5 at a time onto the ice every minute thereby containing risk of sustained contact and exposure. Studies conducted by Finnish analytics website Wisehockey and Eastern Michigan University show that "close range exposure time" during youth hockey games — even with

full contact allowed — ranges from 3-4 minutes of a player being within 2 meters (~6.6 feet) of another, and less than three seconds of immediate proximity or actual contact.

Next, we want to ensure you understand the dangerous economic consequences of the new restrictions for the ice rinks in Connecticut. Currently, Connecticut is the only state in New England and the East Coast that prohibits hockey teams from practicing. Prohibiting hockey teams from practicing will have a detrimental effect on ice rink businesses as non-professional and non-collegiate hockey teams account for the majority of ice rentals. Furthermore, limiting ice rentals to just four players and one instructor for each sheet of ice would not be economically feasible for the majority of hockey players and families who mainly are from working-class families as ice rental fees are \$400 or more for just one hour of ice. In fact, the new team sport rules discriminate against middle income and low-income families as they are making it financially prohibitive for them to continue to condition and train for hockey as their only alternative is expensive private lessons. Ice rinks in Connecticut will ultimately suffer as there will be limited patrons who can rent their ice due to the new restrictions.

Lastly, we want to make you aware that the new restrictions can cause more harm than good in its goal of limiting the spread of COVID-19. The current restrictions will not stop hockey for Connecticut's families. These families are traveling to neighboring states where practices or games are allowed, staying at hotels, eating at restaurants, thereby increasing the risk of spreading COVID-19 when they return to Connecticut.

**The impact of not allowing practices will cause many ice rinks to go out of business.** Unlike the majority of other sports that utilize public fields and spaces, privately owned ice rinks are very expensive to build and operate. Ice rinks are now watching helplessly as programs leave Connecticut to other states that are allowing practices. As a result, rink owners are forced to lay-off hundreds of Connecticut workers.

We are writing to make clear to you that if the new team sport rules continue for ice hockey, they will force the closing of ice rinks in Connecticut before the pause is lifted in January which will unnecessarily negatively impact many Connecticut families and businesses, as well as the future of hockey in Connecticut.

Our request is that you at a minimum allow teams to practice with a defined number of players and qualified coaches in a safe and secure manner until the end of the January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021 pause. Practices can safely and securely proceed with Connecticut team USA Hockey rostered players only, based on capacity not to exceed 1 person per 400 square feet (under 20% building capacity), provided our current safety measures such as face coverings being worn at all times and indoor locker rooms remaining closed continue.

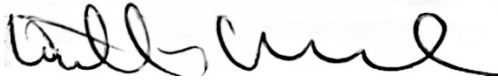
Thank you for your prompt consideration,



Robert Crawford  
Champions Skating Center – Cromwell, CT  
Bolton Ice Palace – Bolton, CT  
International Skating Center, Simsbury, CT



Chuck Wilkerson, President  
Connecticut Hockey Conference



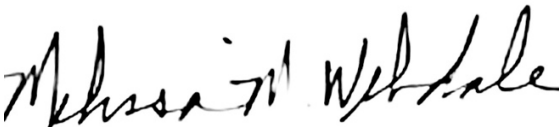
Bill Maniscalco  
Northford Ice Pavilion – Northford, CT



Lenny Grigorian  
South Windsor Arena - South Windsor, CT



Chris Buonanno  
Danbury Arena – Danbury, CT



Melissa Webdale  
Wintergarden Ice Arena - Ridgefield, CT



Lisa Fedick  
Wonderland of Ice - Bridgeport, CT  
RoseGarden Ice Arena - Norwich, CT



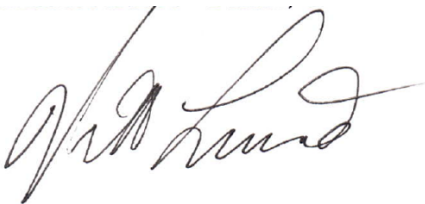
Sean Donohue  
Louis Astorino Ice Arena - Hamden, CT



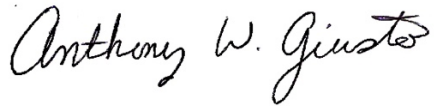
Paul J Shimko  
Milford Ice Arena - Milford, CT



Chris Robustelli  
Darien Ice House - Darien, CT



Vito Lucciano  
SoNo Ice House - Norwalk, CT



Anthony W. Giusto  
Newington Arena - Newington, CT



Keith Hillebrecht  
Enfield Twin Rinks - Enfield, CT

cc: Paul Mounds, Chief of Staff to the Governor of the State of Connecticut