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May 12, 2020

Dr. Jamey Harrison
Deputy Director
University Interscholastic League
P.O. Box 8028
Austin, Texas 78713

Submitted via email to: jharrison@uilex.org; mac@uilex.org

Dear Dr. Harrison,

On behalf of the more than 4,200 members of the Texas Pediatric Society, the Texas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, thank you for your efforts to keep Texas children active and healthy. I believe we share a common vision – that the most important resource of our state is its children, and we must continually direct our efforts to promote their health and welfare.

We have recently become aware of guidance provided by the University Interscholastic League (UIL) Medical Advisory Committee (MAC) to the UIL Legislative Council and amendments to the UIL Constitution and Contest Rules relating to loosening requirements on Pre-Participation Physical Examination (PPE) for athletic participation. While we recognize UIL's intent to ensure there is no undue burden on families enrolling their children in athletic extracurriculars for the 2020-2021 seasons, the Texas Pediatric Society strongly recommends that children and adolescents still receive their annual well child or adolescent exam which often coincides with their annual required PPE. Annual preventive exams, even during a pandemic, are essential health care. These exams serve as an opportunity to address a myriad of medical and psychosocial issues not necessarily associated with sports participation such as vaccinations and anticipatory guidance on nutrition, dealing with stress and proper sleep hygiene. A PPE acts as an important entry point for healthy adolescents into the health-care system, which is even more important now due to significant changes in a youth's life over the past several months due to COVID-19 (no school, no sports, no friends, etc.).

In addition, TPS would like to make the UIL aware of current pediatric primary care practice viability and bandwidth. As you may be aware, the Texas healthcare system has been extremely stressed due to COVID-19, but most primary care practices are seeing 50-70 percent decreases in patient volume. This has resulted in scary decreases in vaccination rates across the country¹ and many practices are struggling to maintain enough cash flow to keep medical staff hired and available and it is vital that families are encouraged to still contact their medical home and schedule essential health care appointments.

1 Santoli. J.M., et al. (May 8, 2020). Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Routine Pediatric Vaccine Ordering and Administration — United States, 2020. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/pdfs/mm6919e2-H.pdf>

Pediatricians are making herculean efforts to ensure their practices are safe for patients by scheduling sick and preventive visits at different times of the day, creating separate entrances for sick and well patients, and thoroughly disinfecting throughout the day. It is vital that the UIL continue to impress on school districts and families that seeking preventive care at the child's pediatric medical home is essential healthcare, even during a pandemic.²

To this end, the leadership of the Texas Pediatric Society would very much appreciate a virtual meeting in the next week to discuss next steps and future collaboration on issues pertaining to the PPE for the 2020-2021 school year. Thank you for your consideration and please reach out to Clayton Travis, Director of Advocacy and Health Policy of the Texas Pediatric Society at Clayton.Travis@txpeds.org or 214-686-2272 to schedule a meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tammy Camp, MD". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tammy Camp, MD, FAAP
President, Texas Pediatric Society

Cc: University Interscholastic League Medical Advisory Committee

² American Academy of Pediatrics. (May 8, 2020). Guidance on Providing Pediatric Well-Care During COVID-19. Retrieved from: <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/guidance-on-providing-pediatric-well-care-during-covid-19/>