

May 26, 2020

The Honorable Tom Wolf
Office of the Governor
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Phil Murphy
Office of Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625

The Honorable John Carney
Tatnall Building
150 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd South
Dover, DE 19901

Governors Wolf, Murphy and Carney,

We represent the leadership of Middle Atlantic Swimming, Allegheny Mountain Swimming and New Jersey Swimming, the local governing bodies of USA Swimming in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware, and over 26,000 USA Swimming athletes, 2,500 USA Swimming coaches and volunteers from over 250 registered USA Swimming clubs. We also write in support of the hundreds of thousands of youth and residents who depend on developmental swimming throughout the region every day for water safety, aquatics development, and swim training.

As you work together on the multi-state taskforce to phase reopening, we respectfully ask through this letter to consider the activities and facilities related to developmental swimming as life sustaining and essential, and to authorize, safely and within federal and state guidelines, the immediate reopening of all indoor and outdoor developmental aquatics facilities in May, 2020.

First, we want to stress the critical difference between developmental swimming, an essential and life sustaining resident need that supports the livelihood wellness and safety of our citizens, and recreational swimming activities, an important activity but focused on leisure. In the former case, “development water” and related facilities are defined as indoor and outdoor water of the appropriate depth and dimensions for the purposes of aquatics swim lessons, water safety, drownproofing programs and developmental age-group, athlete training and competition. Where both swim activities surround the use of water, industry statistics and usage show that developmental facilities must be prioritized separately for facility reopening purposes. We also want to stress our understanding that while developmental swimming serves readiness for competition we do not, through this letter, propose at this stage readiness for traditional swim competitions. As outlined by USA Swimming, these activities will come later in a safe, phased approach. This letter focuses solely on the critical need for developmental swimming to resume.

For the reasons below, we hope you conclude as we have that developmental water facilities as defined must be authorized to open given, they are critical to help ensure the wellness of residents; save kids’

lives; support educational and athletic futures; and allow our state and Commonwealth athletes to stay competitive nationally.

Additionally, we offer the detail below showing that these critical, life sustaining benefits come at very low risk to public safety as developmental aquatics facilities and the governing bodies that help oversee them like USA Swimming are focused on safe, compliant swimming operations and stand ready to support immediate opening.

Ensuring Wellness and Savings Kids Lives

Drowning, according to the American Red Cross, is a leading cause of death in children ages 1-4. Furthermore, the Red Cross found that 40% of parents of youth ages 4-17 have children who have no basic swimming skills. However, statistics indicate 90% say their children, lacking these skills, will nonetheless participate in water activities. That puts PA, NJ and DE kids at risk, and further behind on essential swim development training as we enter into the warmer months where they will find non-developmental outdoor water on their own.

Tragically, the hardest hit by lack of developmental swim programs are those in our lower-income and historically disadvantaged communities. In fact, according to the USA Swimming Foundation 79% of children in households with incomes less than \$50,000 have little-to-no swimming ability yet formal swim lessons reduce the likelihood of childhood drowning by 88%. Opening indoor and outdoor developmental water facilities can help stop this dangerous trend and we stand ready to help. Lastly, as noted by the CDC, closure is likely to cause increase anxiety among students, families, and community members leading to other risks such as mental illness, teen suicide and chemical dependency. Organized developmental aquatics, as supported by USA Swimming and similar organizations, is widely known to provide significant mental health benefits to citizens of all ages.

To combat this aquatics-related public safety challenge as we progress out of the COVID-19 environment, leading communities across the country are already rapidly reopening pools and water safety programs to get kids back in the water. In fact, many other states are already open to some level of developmental swimming with more to open in early June. We, respectfully, believe that the reopening timetable for indoor and outdoor developmental water in PA, NJ and DE can be likewise accelerated and improved to allow for the critical health and safety benefits of swim development for our citizens.

USA Swimming focuses on developmental instruction and water safety programs for all ages from early childhood through adults in our Masters programs. This includes active participation in the USA Swimming Foundation's "Make-a-Splash" Program which partners with government leaders like you to provide critical water safety and drown-proofing for thousands of youth each year. For example, this program is consistent with state programs like SafeKidsPA, which we have and will continue to support under our non-profit charters to get more kids back in the pool for water safety and development programs as soon as possible.

Defining indoor and outdoor developmental and competitive water as a life sustaining and essential activity, and authorizing the opening of such facilities immediately in May 2020, will help save lives and get the health and wellness of our youth back on track.

Supporting Educational and Athletic Futures

For thousands of youth athletes in our region, swimming is essential for their livelihood, education and future careers. Each year thousands of youth in our states compete in age-group swimming at the club, USA and high school level. These athletes are hard-working, known for their strong academic and

athletic performance, train typically 6 days per week year-round, and depend on the regimen of swimming for its well-known benefits for mental wellness as well as physical health. Hundreds of these youth depend on this training to stay competitive to win critical athletic scholarships and many of those depend on aquatics and the rapidly advancing Fall swim season as their only affordable option for higher education. Lastly, the swimming athletes in our states include dozens of known and new Olympic hopefuls, and thousands of swimmers at the senior and junior national levels who depend on our indoor and outdoor water. We ask for your support of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware swimming athletes so they can get back into the water and work towards their futures amongst their national and global peers.

High Return, Low Risk to Citizens

Lastly, please know that we are appreciative of your leadership through the COVID-19 pandemic, and protecting so many lives in the process. For decades, USA Swimming in our states have followed the same path and we commit to work with you to plan for a safe return to aquatics development without jeopardizing the health and safety of facilities, staff, and members of the community.

Through this letter we respectfully offer and propose that developmental aquatic activities supported by governing bodies such as USA Swimming proactively adhere to guidelines and mandates established by the CDC, American Red Cross and State Departments of Health. Most of which nationally have already taken actions to lift restrictions on aquatic activities. Further, USA Swimming, not unlike several other governing bodies nationally, have for years instituted strict operational risk and safety protocols that serve to protect our youth. These standards already include guidelines for our certified coaches, officials, and athletes to follow in in aquatics facilities.

Below are further examples of safe aquatics operations that are consistent with federal and state standards, and how we will support the safety and wellbeing of citizens through facility reopening. We realize that COVID-19 infection can be an equation of both virus exposure and time. As such, you will note in the proposed approach that swim development in a structured environment can lessen risk through limitations to physical factors as well as the number of swimmers allowed in certain spaces and the time spent in the facility. We hope you find these draft criteria and phased approach below helpful as you consider guidelines for opening:

- The CDC and NIH are confident that COVID-19 is not transmitted through water; specifically, water with trace amounts of disinfectant. (Chlorine residual required in public pools with weekly random testing as required by the State Board of Health)
- Signage with COVID-19 Guidelines and Symptoms will be posted for staff and visitors
- Occupancy restrictions for Phase One, immediately in May, will be limited to 25% of a facility's designated promoting further space between swimmers
- Swimmers will have access to facilities with 45 minutes of activity, followed by 15 minutes of sanitizing before the next group will be permitted entry; transitions will be monitored assuring safe social distancing
- Swimmers will arrive in bathing attire and will provide any chairs that might be required during their visit
- Precautions will be made limiting "touch-surfaces" for entry and exit from the water
- Bathrooms will only be available for toilet purposes. Visitors will be encouraged to use their personal bathrooms, at home, prior to entry. Locker rooms and changing areas are to remain closed
- There will be no communal use of equipment

- Protocols will be in place through communication with EMS to respond in adherence to safety protocols in the event of a swimmer developing COVID-19 symptoms or requires other medical attention
- Swimming is a non-contact activity lending itself to physical distancing by nature. Lane lines can further differentiate/separate participants. Additional staff, not lifeguards, can be used to control social distancing guidelines
- Occupancy restrictions can be mandated to further ensure social distancing can be modified in accordance with future phased directives
- Staff are required to socially distance themselves except in situations where Emergency Response Plans may negate. In the event of an Emergency Response, trainings and protocols will dictate actions

We look forward to working with you to quickly develop and deploy a phased opening of developmental aquatics facilities starting in May across your states in a way that is both consistent with your reopening protocols and safe for participants with the use of appropriate Federal and state PPE protocols and physical distancing guidelines in place. Please find attached USA Swimming’s comprehensive plan for facility reopening and other helpful links.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this topic we find essential to the health, safety and welfare of your youth in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. Through these signatures, we respectfully request immediate authorization for the opening of indoor and outdoor developmental swimming facilities in our states and look forward to working with you.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions and to coordinate at your convenience.

Respectfully,



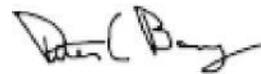
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Useful Links:

[CDC Considerations for Public Pools](#)

[CDC Model Aquatic Health Code](#)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/considerations-for-school-closure.pdf>

[American Red Cross Scientific Advisory Council Answers COVID-19 and Aquatics](#)

[OSHA Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)

[USA Swimming Facility Re-Opening Messaging and Planning](#)