

Dear members of the judiciary committee,

My name is Dusty Wells and I am a resident of Olathe, Kansas. I am a substitute teacher in the district as well as an assistant in one of the kindergartens. I have a 16 year old son who will be a senior at Olathe South High School this fall.

I am here today to speak out my concerns about the restrictions Governor Kelly has put on our state and, in particular, on Johnson County. First and foremost, it has been devastating for my family and I not to be allowed to go to church. The basic freedom to worship my God is my most treasured constitutional right. There are also many other concerns. At the end of April, Governor Kelly outlined a re-entry plan that set May 18 for the opening of organized sports and June 1 for the resuming of all high school sports. Although many of us felt those dates were excessive, we, at least had the hope and expectation that those openings would, indeed, happen. Sadly, those hopes were dashed when, not only did the governor pretty much ignore the May 18 date, but actually cancelled ALL high school sports for the entire month of June, effectively setting all incoming senior athletes back an entire month on their very important conditioning and training schedules. These functions and camps have been cancelled at a great cost not only to the development of these athletes but also financially. Tournaments that we had already paid for we are having difficulty getting refunded. A friend of mine is losing money on an out-of-state tournament that included air travel. Spring club fees have been paid in advance and may or may not be refundable. Of course, financial and emotional stress is everywhere. Our next door neighbors have 2 young children. The mother told me the other day that she is frantic trying to work from home. Even though I have always taken care of children I cannot even give her a break because of the stay at home orders.

The prospect of this governor making the decision as to whether or not our children will go to school this fall is very concerning. Especially in light of some of the reports that have come out recently saying that indeed the virus has climbed more in areas that are still shut down than in those who have reopened. A recent statistic revealed that, in Johnson County, there have been 56 deaths from Covid. 76% of those deaths were people over 80. 2 were under 60 and zero were under 40 years of age. Hardly a threat to school age population. My husband, who has practiced medicine for over 40 years, has said from the get-go that this virus is no more dangerous to our school student body than the common flu. Two days ago, a team of doctors in California reported they have come up with a medicine that is what they are expecting to be the end of this disease and that it could be administered as early as July. Good news, right?! And yet, we as tax paying parents are being threatened with schools NOT opening and sports being done away with under the mask of "public safety" in spite of the fact that it would appear the curve of the disease has been successfully flattened. Our hospitals are NOT over run; indeed they are having to put people on furlough in order to stay in business.

Online school was a farce. My son had a total of 12 assignments between March 17 and May 14. ALL of the math was a repeat of what he had already done earlier in the year and the answers were given to the students. So he basically had no math at all for 2 months.

I work in elementary schools. Our students who were struggling in March have very little chance now to be even close to where they need to be next fall. My daughter is a board certified behavior analyst in the North Kansas City School district and she called me early on during the shutdown asking for serious prayer for her students and their parents as they are

now isolated with no person to person support. Educators everywhere are saying that children's mental health is being put at risk because of not being in the classroom.

In an age of escalated teen suicide and depression, what an awful time to restrict developing students from social interaction, music, drama, and sports—all of it— and for what? And there lies our problem. Our constitutional right to choose. Those who do not feel safe in public schools have other options such as home schooling or private schools or if they want, even online study. I have no problem if some people want to do that. It's their right. But for those of us who want to exercise our constitutional rights for our kids to attend public schools should and must be provided with, as tax payers, in-school classes and full sports programs in our public schools. That is our right. The possibility of that happening this fall is getting dimmer every week as Governor Kelly's restrictions continue to extend and expand.

My son is young and strong. He is an aspiring athlete. Soccer to him is not just a game but a life choice. He and thousands of others like him, deserve a full and uninterrupted senior year.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

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