



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PIAA OPPOSES EQUITY COMMITTEE END AROUND

Since 1972, when the General Assembly adopted legislation requiring PIAA to permit private schools to join PIAA, PIAA has treated all schools equally. We recognize there are differences between them and there is a perception that private schools have an unfair competitive advantage in some sports. To address this, PIAA, has firmed up its transfer rules and adopted a competition formula to address competitive balance based upon the wishes of the membership. The process of re-classifying schools will begin at the end of the 2019 fall sports season.

Last September, the Pennsylvania Athletic Oversight Committee (PAOC) directed the self-appointed Equity Committee to work with PIAA to address that group's concerns. In November, PIAA met with representatives of this group. At that time, they presented no plan for a playoff structure change. Nevertheless, the Board has seriously and extensively evaluated the group's concerns. We have also met with a number of legislators to address their concerns and recommendations.

The Board of Directors, after studying the issue, does not believe creating segregated public/private classifications and/or tournaments is the answer. There are numerous reasons for this. This proposal of having 18% of private schools being guaranteed 50% of the championship entries promotes inequities in post-season opportunities. Extending sports seasons to host an additional tournament of champions between private and public schools serves no educational purpose. This would cause scheduling issues, would be detrimental to the health and safety of student-athletes and their possible participation in subsequent sport seasons.

The elimination of the transfer rule would expose Pennsylvania athletes and schools to the chaos that has resulted in those states which have done so. It requires little research to see what has happened in states that permit open transfers. AAU teams, shoe companies and other third parties promote consolidation of top athletes at "preferred" schools, which result in powerhouses where schools simply reload each year with high profile athletes.

While we understand desires to solve perceived problems, this approach is contrary to the PAOC's direction, which is to have all of the represented constituencies, discuss and address the issues. That is the function of the PIAA Board of Directors, which has all groups represented. Despite representations that all stakeholders were at the table, PIAA was not part of the development of this legislation. This legislation is a disappointing effort at an end run around the PAOC's position.

PIAA will continue to work with the PAOC to develop competitive balance among all member schools. PIAA believes that this proposed legislation is ill-advised, contrary to the purposes of PIAA, is unfair to our membership and should be rejected.

Beginning in Pittsburgh, on December 29, 1913, PIAA was given the privilege of serving its member schools and registered officials by establishing policies and adopting contest rules that emphasize the educational values of interscholastic athletics, promote safe and sportsmanlike competition and provide uniform standards for all interscholastic levels of competition.