

January 15, 2009  
16 Cross Street  
Kittery, Maine 03904

Dear Members of the MPA IMC

I am writing to you as the parent of two former high school athletes asking for you to vote against a proposal that I feel would have a devastating effect on students in this state.

As a parent, former coach and someone who competed at the high school level it is easy to see the value of having young people exposed to high caliber performers. While only a small percentage of high school graduates go on to compete after graduation those who do, tend to be those fortunate enough to have been exposed to regional or national events. Voting to withdraw Maine athletes from New England competition sends a message that we should not look outside our borders or strive to improve our abilities to compete in a world that is becoming increasing global in scope.

While attending Traip Academy in Kittery from 2004-2008 my daughter earned the chance to take part in several regional track and field events. As a student in a small school she often competed against athletes whose communities did not have the resources to help kids reach their potential. Danielle was blessed with the ability to high jump and had coaches who recognized natural ability and helped refine her technique which put her at the top of her class. We watched her grow from a quiet, shy girl to a confident young woman, developing a positive attitude and inner strength, willing to take constructive criticism, to learn from her mistakes and to demonstrate the true spirit of sportsmanship. There is little doubt in my mind that her experience at the regional and national level opened her thinking to the possibilities for her further education, and in dealing with personal challenges and setbacks in her life. She got to compete with some incredibly talented kids, some of whom may be headed to the Olympics, and even though she never medaled, and her parents paid the costs of getting her to Massachusetts, Connecticut or New York, we feel that it was worth every penny. Danielle is now a proud member of the Colby College track team preparing for another season in Waterville, learning to balance the demands on her schedule while helping to inspire other girls to reach higher.

Understanding that the current economic situation is likely to play a role in this decision, I ask you to consider other alternatives to simply withdrawing Maine High School athletes from New England competition. While it may only benefit a small percentage of the thousands of young people in the state who currently take part in sports, for those who do it can be a dream come true, and open the door to endless possibilities in their lives. I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,

Bob Sheppard

Cc; Wanda Avery, Michael Roberge