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**August 24, 2020**

Dear School Families,

Since the emergence of the coronavirus as a national health emergency last spring, we have worked diligently to maintain the health and safety of each member of every school community while continuing to provide an educational product of unparalleled excellence.

As the landscape of the pandemic has shifted over time, we have taken steps to meet continued challenges and communicated with you regularly regarding essential decisions. Our commitment to school safety and clear communication is steadfast.

As you are likely aware, the PIAA shared a public announcement last Friday afternoon that its board voted to permit fall sporting competitions to take place in high schools around the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania at the discretion of the local school entity.

In the case of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the local entity consists of all 17 high schools in the five-county region as a unified body. In reality, we are a system of secondary schools and the Department of Education in Harrisburg views us a school district spanning multiple counties.

Our system operates under the jurisdiction of the Office of Catholic Education and Faith in the Future. As such, senior leadership from both FIF and OCE have carefully deliberated PIAA's announcement through the lens of the principles that have always shaped our response to the pandemic—preserving health and safety, following guidelines established by the governor, Department of Health and Department of Education, and maintaining a consistent **system-wide** approach to decision making.

After much careful thought, consultation, and prayer a decision has been reached that all of our high schools will opt out of participation in interscholastic competition for the fall 2020 season. We recognize that this news is disappointing to many of our students, families and coaches, particularly our seniors. It saddens us greatly as well. We recognize the value of athletics as part of our educational philosophy that seeks to provide for the holistic formation of young men and women of character. This is not the scenario any of us desired.

We are confident that PIAA will seek to provide alternative solutions for those entities opting out of fall programs in the coming semester. The pandemic has made every aspect of life unpredictable for all of us over the past several months. As we continue to live in a time of uncertainty, it would be imprudent to speculate regarding an exact time when competitions will resume or regarding the status of spring semester athletics. In keeping with our commitment, we will share timely information with you about developments and decisions affecting our schools.

Schools that have individual fees for athletics will delay them until later in the year. In some schools, there is one combined fee instead of separate athletics, so in those cases the fees remained

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unchanged. However, in the event, we are forced to cancel any athletic programs; we will prorate all applicable fees.

Please know that we share your disappointment regarding the current status of fall sports programs. It is our hope that your disappointment will be tempered by an understanding that we have an obligation to protect all those entrusted to our care. Athletics could not be treated separately and it fell to us to make this decision in a manner consistent with everything else done to this time. Given the nature of athletic competition and the manner in which COVID-19 is transmitted, there is currently no way for us to reasonably provide for the health and safety of student-athletes as well as those with whom they come into contact.

We are grateful to Governor Wolf and the Departments of Health and Education for their sound guidance to school districts throughout the Commonwealth and look forward to working with PIAA regarding possible solutions as we move forward. Our greatest degree of gratitude goes to our students, parents, coaches, teachers, staff, and administrators for their continued trust and dedication to the gift of Catholic education.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sister Maureen L. McDermott, I.H.M." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sister Maureen Lawrence McDermott, I.H.M., Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Secondary Schools

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Irene Horstmann Hannan".

Irene Horstmann Hannan  
Chief Executive Officer  
Faith in the Future

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