



CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
JIMMY PATRONIS
STATE OF FLORIDA

August 10, 2020

Dear University Presidents:

I have been following recent media coverage regarding the possibility that college sports may be postponed through 2020, and I want to offer my support in working to move heaven and earth to ensure that's not the case. As a proud graduate of Florida State University, I know just how important college athletics are to the institutions, the fans, the community businesses, but most importantly – the athletes themselves. I'm afraid that many of these players that rely on sports scholarships for their education will be thrown into academic purgatory with universities cancelling their seasons.

No doubt, the human toll that COVID-19 has had on our people and country is horrible. Every life that the virus has taken from us is a tragedy – simple as that. It's a horrible disease, it's highly contagious, and it's something we have to take seriously. But I think we have to be dispassionate about the science: young athletes can handle this virus better than anyone else. These young men and women love to compete; they love being active, and behind each athlete are family members, coaches, teachers and loved ones who want them to succeed. Many of these students are relying on their scholarships.

After every tragedy our nation has faced, we've figured out a way to move forward, and we need to figure out a way to get kids back on the field; the court, the swimming pool, and so forth. Additionally, let's not forget about the mental toll that will fall on our athletes who derive incredible joy and meaning from playing sports with their teammates. As I have witnessed with my own children, sports provide an outlet that helps provide structure and teaches important lessons on teamwork and leadership that's hard to replicate in the classroom.

If you're concerned about the legal liability of letting student athletes compete, let's talk. Next legislative session, I plan to pursue legislation to protect our businesses and non-profits from legal firms who see the coronavirus as a business opportunity. I've had over 20 meetings with Chambers across the state, I'm a former business owner, I was on the Governor's Re-Open Florida Task Force, and I get how important it is to build protections so we can get back to normal. I want to hear from you – specifically – what it will take to get back to the important work of educating our nation's future.

In this day and age, we ask so much of our students. Let's lead by example and show them that the adults can work together to meet our own tough goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jimmy Patronis".

Jimmy Patronis
Chief Financial Officer