

May 12, 2020

The Honorable Ralph Northam
Governor
Commonwealth of Virginia
Post Office Box 1475
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Governor Northam:

Thank you for continuing to provide guidance to the residents of the Commonwealth as you plan to safely reopen our economy. We, the undersigned 27 community pools in Northern Virginia, understand the difficulty developing policies regarding a novel and unprecedented virus present and appreciate all efforts to return the Commonwealth to some level of normalcy. Today we are writing to seek clarity as it relates to community outdoor pools during Phases I and II and ask that you consider the unique characteristics and circumstances of nonprofit community swimming pools as you establish further guidelines.

Nonprofit community pools have been a foundational part of local Virginia communities, many in operation since the 1950s. They are places where people from disparate backgrounds gather to escape the heat, exercise, compete, and visit with neighbors. This large network of community pools is why northern Virginia is home to the second-largest swim league in the nation -- the Northern Virginia Swim League (NVSL) -- which boasts roughly 17,000 young swimmers. Many of our members need their pool now more than ever. With school, spring sports, religious events, and other activities now cancelled, the pool may be the last place to escape, particularly during the coming summer swelter. While we, our members, and their children are extremely disappointed the NVSL cancelled the summer swim and dive season, we hope to salvage some element of exercise, repose, and camaraderie for our anxious members.

The uncertainty created by the current situation is particularly deleterious to community pools. We are member-funded nonprofits organized under section 501(c)(7) of the federal tax code. Community pools are run by volunteer boards of directors and are aided by scores of volunteers that help make our organizations successful. We are all spending significant funds to prepare our pools for opening, which for most of us is usually Memorial Day weekend. Collectively, we support thousands of direct and indirect jobs, many of which go to hundreds of local high school and college students who work as lifeguards, swim and dive coaches, snack bar workers and other seasonal positions. If we are not able to make offers now, we may not be able to secure the personnel needed to run our pools.

We appreciate the decision to open the Virginia economy requires balancing different equities. After reviewing your May 9th press conference and the accompanying PowerPoint presentation as well as Executive Orders 61 and 62, we continue to be uncertain about when or under what conditions we may operate. For example, EO 61 permits only 1 person per swim lane. While EO 61 limits the number of people in the pool, it is not clear if the ten-person gathering rule applies only to the pool or the entire pool area (pool + deck). According to scientific data, outdoor activity is lower risk¹, and sunlight² and chlorine³ seem to deactivate the virus. This data, and the unique nature and benefits provided by outdoor pools, should be weighed as you provide community pools the guidance and clarity that we need for operating this summer.

As your COVID-19 Business Task Force considers what Phase II might allow, we welcome the opportunity to contribute to the process. We can answer questions and provide information on the composition of our membership, including the specific needs of our young members, the risk profile of outdoor pools, and the nature of nonprofit community pool economics so we can operate for the 2020 summer season and beyond. We have established our own reopening working group with experts from our collective communities to consider these important matters. Our clubs, in conjunction with some of our pool management companies, are also working closely to share best practices. Our goal is to provide our members with a safe and healthy environment for family recreation.

We fully recognize the difficult task you have in deciding how to reopen Virginia. If needed to provide the clarification we are seeking, we stand ready to serve as a resource. Please don't hesitate to contact Will Moschella (president@highpointpool.net), President of High Point Pool and Tony Poole (tpoole@ajw-inc.com), President of Highlands Swim and Tennis Club.

Sincerely,

1. Leonardo Sarli, President, Arlington Forest Club
2. Paul Hedrick, President, Chesterbrook Swim & Tennis Club
3. Doug Cox, Vice President, Country Club Hills Pool
4. Jennifer Smith, President, Dominion Hills Area Recreation Association
5. Bob Hutchison, President, Donaldson Run Recreation Association

¹ Johnson, Marty, The Hill, [New study finds few cases of outdoor transmission of coronavirus in China](#) (April 23, 2020).

² Kosnar, Michael, NBC News, [Inside the secret DHS lab testing how long coronavirus can survive on shopping carts and in sunlight](#), May 6, 2020.

³ Centers for Disease Control, [Water and COVID-19 FAQs](#), (“There is no evidence that the virus that causes COVID-19 can be spread to people through the water in pools, hot tubs, spas, or water play areas.”).

6. Greg Schossler, President, Fair Oaks Recreation Association
7. Aimee Gallagher, President, Great Falls Swim and Tennis Club
8. Stephanie Leger Short, President, Hamlet Swim and Tennis Club
9. Jennifer Guy, President, Highland Park Pool
10. Will Moschella, President, High Point Pool
11. Tony Poole, President, Highlands Swim and Tennis Club
12. Jim McGovern, President, Hunt Valley Swim Club
13. Meghan Thomas, President, Kent Gardens Recreation Club
14. Dave Borsos, President, Langley Swim and Tennis Club
15. Tim Aubry, President, Lee-Graham Swimming Pool
16. Mark Murphy, President, McLean Swim and Tennis Association
17. Lauren Bazel, Commodore, Mount Vernon Yacht Club
18. Chuck Monnig, President, Mosby Woods Pool
19. Bob Neuman, President, Overlee Community Association
20. Dan O'Grady, President, Poplar Heights Recreation Association
21. Andrew M. Orlando, President, Sleepy Hollow Bath and Racquet Club
22. Mike Bizer, President, Sleepy Hollow Recreation Association
23. Bill English Sr., President, Tuckahoe Recreation Club
24. AJ Oskuie, President, Vienna Woods Swim Club
25. Eliza Jacobs, President, Virginia Hills Swim Club
26. John Ellenberger, President, Villa Aquatic Club
27. Brian Costanzo, President, WayneWood Recreation Association

cc:

Libby Garvey, Chair, Arlington County Board
Jeff McKay, Chair, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Phyllis Randall, Chair, Loudoun County Board of Supervisors
Ann Wheeler, Chair, Prince William County Board of Supervisors
Justin Wilson, Mayor, Alexandria City Council
David Tarter, Mayor, Falls Church City Council