



# MANHASSET PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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## *Board of Education*

Steven Panzik, President  
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July 15, 2024

Angelique Johnson-Dingle  
Deputy Commissioner  
NYS Education Department  
Office of P-12 Education  
55 Hanson Place  
Brooklyn, NY 11217

Re: Proposed amendments to Sections 135.1, 135.4, 135.5

Dear Deputy Commissioner Dingle:

The Manhasset School District fully supports any and all action that expands opportunities throughout our athletic programs. We also recognize the importance of including steps that promote equality among the genders and promote opportunities for all student athletes. While it is understood that the Board of Regents shares our commitment to provide athletes of all genders an equal opportunity to participate in school athletics, significant concern exists that the current proposed amendments to the Mixed Competition rules would have the opposite effect. Indeed, the amendments are more likely to result in unfair competition and increased risk of injury. Moreover, as proposed, the amendments would cause reduced participation from, and infringe upon the opportunities of, female student athletes. Mandating that male athletes must be permitted to participate alongside their female classmates carries the idea of equality. However, the decree must be considered from the perspective of the many female athletes, and their families, who will choose not to participate or even tryout for fear of injury and physical disparities. As well as, potentially displacing female athletes from their teams thereby reducing the female athletes opportunities in the athletic arena, which is incongruent to the aims of Title IX.

The blanket protocols would also trivialize an Athletic Director's firsthand knowledge of athletes and their programs that is essential to ensuring safe and fair playing fields. A district's Athletic Director currently has a commitment to ensure the safety and well-being of all students. Implementing a one size fits all approach to apply against the unique traits of our young athletes overlooks the individuality that shapes each individual. It is axiomatic that a statewide form rule is not an appropriate substitute for the Athletic Directors' actual knowledge and consequent ability to maintain safe playing conditions while supporting equal opportunities across gender lines.

We should consider if a one-size-fits-all approach is appropriate, especially when we have qualified athletic directors who can consider and assess the needs of all athletes. Otherwise, strict adherence to the proposed amendments as written, is likely to undermine the best judgment when

local Athletic Directors undertake to fulfill their duty to protect student athletes while maintaining the integrity of public school athletics in New York.

Accordingly, the Manhasset School District strongly opposes the proposed amendments to Sections 135.1, 135.4, 135.5.

Respectfully submitted,

Manhasset Board of Education