TAHOE TRUCKEE
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

PATHWAYS TO POSSIBILITIES AND STUDENT SUCCESS

District Office
Kerstin Kramer
Superintendent
Chief Learning Officer
11603 Donner Pass Rd
Truckee, CA
96161-4953
P (530) 582-2500
F (530) 582-7606
www.ttusd.org

Board of Trustees
Patrick Mooney
Area 1
Kirsten Livak
Area 2
Cristina Hennessey
Area 3
Denyelle Nishimori
Area 4
Dianna Driller
Area 5

Elementary Schools
Donner Trail Elementary
Glenshire Elementary
Kings Beach Elementary
Tahoe Lake Elementary
Truckee Elementary

Middle Schools
Alder Creek Middle
North Tahoe Middle

High Schools
Cold Stream Alternative
North Tahoe High
Sierra High
Tahoe Truckee High

An Equal Opportunity Employer

Direct Investigations Office
California Department of Education
1430 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Date: January 21, 2026

Re: Tahoe Truckee Unified School District (TTUSD/District) – Response to Corrective Actions and Formal Request for Two-Year Transition Plan to California Interscholastic Federation (CIF)

To the Direct Investigations Office,

On behalf of the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District (TTUSD), this letter formally articulates the District's position regarding the timeline for our transition from the Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association (NIAA) to the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF). While TTUSD acknowledges the California Department of Education's (CDE) mandate for an immediate switch, the District respectfully maintains that a two-year transition plan is necessary to preserve the integrity of our educational and athletic programs.

We wish to begin by emphasizing the substantial areas of agreement between TTUSD and the CDE. Inclusion is a fundamental tenet of the TTUSD strategic plan, vision, and beliefs. We agree that the NIAA policy, which provides no exceptions, effectively excludes a specific student group. Consequently, we understand and accept the necessity of switching to the CIF to ensure full sports programs are available to all students. Evidence of this commitment includes the fact that Superintendent Kramer and district staff have been collaborating with both CIF and NIAA since April 2025, and our CIF application has already been submitted.

The key unresolved issue remains the timeline which CDE has unreasonably established for the District. As you will see in the history review below, the District thoroughly explored an immediate switch to CIF for the 2025-2026 school year, and based on extensive student, parent, and athlete input, and collaboration with CIF, we concluded that an immediate switch to CIF would cause an unreasonable burden on our current student athletes, CIF, and the District. We respectfully ask that CDE reconsider its position on this matter, as is has the potential of causing harm to District students.

The District's initial decision to delay the transition was the result of a comprehensive, data-driven investigation, not an arbitrary act. Following the NIAA policy change on April 2, 2025, TTUSD immediately convened a dedicated Athletic Committee and held a series of public Board deliberations to thoroughly explore an immediate switch.

TAHOE TRUCKEE
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
PATHWAYS TO POSSIBILITIES AND STUDENT SUCCESS

Our rigorous timeline of work in Spring 2025 confirms this due diligence:

- Weekly Athletic Committee meeting held from April 9 through June 11.
- Board public sessions were conducted on May 7, May 14 (Special Meeting), and June 13 (Study Session) to review community feedback, discuss transition delays, and perform a deep-dive analysis of CIF logistics.
- District leadership met directly with CIF Commissioner Mike Garrison on May 14, 2025, to verify logistical realities.

TTUSD also actively resolved critical issues, including student privacy rights, by collaborating with local medical providers (Tahoe Forest Health Systems) to revise the approach to the Sports Physical Form (PPE), allowing families to complete it without required medical exams or DNA testing as required by NIAA. This change in approach created a pathway for our students to participate in sports without violating their privacy rights.

Ultimately, based on extensive input and collaboration, the District concluded that an immediate switch to CIF would cause an unreasonable, multifaceted burden on student-athletes, the District, and CIF.

Following the complaint filed on June 27, 2025, the CDE conducted an investigation and issued a binding order. This order removes the School Board's ability to decide the matter locally and requires an immediate switch to the CIF to ensure the District complies with state law.

We contend that the Direct Investigations Office did not thoroughly or comprehensively investigate the complaint filed in Case Matter No. 2025-0123. The CDE's findings appear to be the result of a mere ***document review*** of the decision "on its face," rather than an investigation of actual practice. Had the CDE conducted a comprehensive investigation—including interviews with staff, families, and our medical partners—you would have discovered that ***no student has been excluded from participation***, and TTUSD is ensuring full compliance with California Education Code 221.5(f).

TTUSD has maintained an unwavering commitment to cooperation throughout the process, evidenced by the following post-investigation actions:

- Submitted Corrective Action #1 proposing the two-year transition plan.
- Responded to the CDE's rejection, which resulted in a subsequent extension.
- Submitted a formal request to meet with Superintendent Thurmond.

To support CDE in acquiring the additional information necessary to make a more informed decision, TTUSD is fully willing to continue the investigation process and provide any further documentation or access required.

TAHOE TRUCKEE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

PATHWAYS TO POSSIBILITIES AND STUDENT SUCCESS

Request for Stay Due to Federal Legal Tumult

We formally request a delay in the enforcement of operational changes due to the current tumult at the federal level. The District is currently "caught between" conflicting State and Federal mandates. Since the CDE's initial investigation, the legal landscape has shifted dramatically with the filing of major lawsuits currently moving through the courts:

- ***State of CA vs. U.S. Dept. of Justice*** **(Complaint Filed June 9, 2025, Case No. 3:25-cv-04863).**
- ***United States v. CIF & CDE*** **(Complaint Filed July 9, 2025, Case No. 8:25-cv-1485).**
- ***West Virginia v. BPJ*** **((2024) 98 F.4th 524)**
- ***Little v. Hecox*** **((2025) 145 S. Ct. 2871)**

These cases are actively being litigated, *West Virginia v. BPJ* and *Little v. Hecox* were recently argued in the Supreme Court, and the decisions from them could impact the District and CDE's decision in this matter. Allowing the District time to make this transition while these cases remain pending allows the District to avoid making a rushed, irreversible transition that could be contradicted by federal rulings in the future.

Rationale for a Two-Year Transition Plan

The Board found that a one-year delay to join CIF (for the 2026/2027 school year) did not provide the anticipated time for in-depth planning and community engagement. An immediate switch would place an undue burden on our current student-athletes, pose travel safety concerns, create significant logistical hurdles, and raise potential legal conflicts that a phased, two-year approach would effectively mitigate.

1. Student Safety and Travel Concerns

- **Hazardous Winter Travel**
  The transition to CIF necessitates a fundamental shift in travel patterns. Unlike our current NIAA competition, which keeps travel east of the Sierra crest, CIF competition requires regular travel over Donner Summit. This presents safety concerns for student transport during the winter months and time needed to mitigate the following adjustments:
    - **Vehicle Procurement**
      To ensure the safety of our students while traversing hazardous mountain passes, the District requires time to budget for, locate, and purchase a specialized fleet of athletic vans capable of handling severe winter conditions. An immediate transition without this infrastructure places students at unnecessary risk.
    - **Overnight Safety Plans**
      In case of unexpected, extended travel delays when returning to the Tahoe Truckee region, time is needed to secure agreements with regional partners for safe overnight accommodations for student-athletes.

TAHOE TRUCKEE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

PATHWAYS TO POSSIBILITIES AND STUDENT SUCCESS

2. Mitigation of Practical Issues and Program Integrity

- **Lack of Facilities**
  The District currently faces a critical lack of indoor practice facilities necessary to accommodate the shift in sports seasons. Specifically, moving Soccer to the winter season creates an immediate infrastructure deficit, as outdoor fields are inaccessible due to snow, and current indoor capacity is insufficient.

- **Seasonal Impacts and Cancellations**
  The realignment of sports seasons—moving **Soccer to winter** and **Tennis to spring**—poses severe operational challenges in our high-altitude climate. An immediate switch is projected to result in a high volume of game cancellations due to weather and a significant loss of home games, as visiting teams may be unable to access our facilities safely.

- **CIF Soccer Solution**
  The district athletic committee, in collaboration with CIF, has determined that a viable solution for our soccer program may be participating in CIF Division 7 soccer, which occurs during the fall season for boys and spring season for girls. The drawback of this option is that students would not be eligible for state championships.

- **Prioritizing Student-Athletes**
  A 2-year transition allows families time to make informed decisions. For example, a highly competitive varsity girls' soccer player may determine that state-level competition is in her best interest and will therefore need to switch to a Nevada school. If we move forward with an immediate switch, the student may not be able to participate next school year due to required "sit-out" periods for varsity players. A two-year transition period to CIF would allow our current varsity players to finish their high school athletics in NIAA and would allow upcoming student-athletes to make decisions about how best to move forward.

3. Alignment and Partnership

The District notes the CDE's assurance that "there remains time to join and meaningfully participate in CIF for 2026-2027" is theoretically accurate, however it is not functionally implementable. We reiterate our concern that entering the CIF mid-cycle will likely result in "Independent Status" for our teams, as league schedules for 2026-2028, are already contractually locked. This forced, mid-cycle entry, creates a formidable challenge to finding consistent, meaningful, and comprehensive athletic opportunities. Being relegated to an Independent Status means our student-athletes will face disruptive , last-minute scheduling, competitive misalignment with opponents, and a significant loss of post-season opportunities—a direct detriment to their overall athletic experience.

TAHOE TRUCKEE
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
PATHWAYS TO POSSIBILITIES AND STUDENT SUCCESS

Furthermore, this rushed timeline completely fails to ensure the practical logistics necessary for a successful program in a mountain environment. Without a two-year window, we cannot secure the specialized transportation fleet required for safe winter travel over Donner Summit, nor can we address the critical infrastructure deficit for indoor practice space caused by moving sports like soccer to the winter season. The consequence is not just organizational inconvenience, but a genuine threat to student safety and program integrity, making any immediate transition impractical.

Current Situation and Formal Request

TTUSD is appealing for the acceptance of the two-year transition plan not as a delay tactic, but as a necessary measure to ensure a thoughtful, safe, and legally compliant transfer of athletic governance. We have already demonstrated our commitment to this switch by submitting our full CIF application and associated fees. We are not resisting the change, we are simply managing its execution in a thoughtful manner.

While the District acknowledges the CDE's urgency, we cannot ignore the safety concerns of winter travel over Donner Summit without adequate infrastructure, nor can we disregard the immediate harm to our current students' athletic experiences. Given our demonstrated cooperation, our good standing with both associations, and the unsettled legal landscape, ***TTUSD formally requests that the Direct Investigations Office approve the two-year transition plan.***

Sincerely,

Kerstin Kramer

Kerstin Kramer

Superintendent Chief Learning Officer