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NYS Public High School Athletic Association
8 Airport Park Boulevard
Latham, N.Y. 12110

To the Executive Committee:

I am writing today to seek the immediate re-instatement of Saunders High School basketball Coach Anthony Nicodemo and Somers High School Coach Chris DiCintio, and to demand the NYS Public High School Athletic Association conduct a comprehensive investigation into the circumstances leading to their wrongful suspension – including whether the actions taken against them are the result of any discriminatory behavior.

At NYSUT, we strongly believe that interscholastic sports are a powerful vehicle to instill positive lifelong values in student athletes. No value can be more important than the basic idea that everyone should be treated fairly, with equal rights and protections. Dedicated educators like Coach Nicodemo and Coach DiCintio regularly stress with their student athletes the importance of teamwork, fairness, good sportsmanship and working together toward team goals that are larger than the individual.

By all accounts, the January 20 Pride on the Court charity basketball game that raised more than \$800 for the Hudson Valley chapter of GLSEN fit with that mission. As you know, GLSEN seeks to build safe and inclusive school environments for LGBTQ students. The game even drew support from Jason Collins, the first openly gay player in the NBA, who praised the teams and participated in the event.

It is outrageous — and contrary to the lessons of fairness and sportsmanship that educators stress every day — for Section One Executive Director Jen Simmons to, more than one month later, suspend Nicodemo and DiCintio for what appears to be an inadvertent clerical error not of their own making. It raises serious questions about whether their punishment was discriminatory in nature. As the state sanctioning body for high school sports, the NYS Public High School Athletic Association should support community-wide events that celebrate diversity and inclusion and raise money for volunteer groups that fight discrimination.

With this in mind, NYSUT urges you to immediately overturn the disciplinary actions taken against these coaches; ensure it is stricken from their records; fully investigate why this action was taken, and whether discrimination and homophobia contributed to Section One's suspension of Nicodemo and DiCintio.

Sincerely,

Andy Pallotta

President

New York State United Teachers

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