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December 10, 2009

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Directors of the North American Society for Pediatric Exercise Medicine in support of the National Athletic Trainers' Association's (NATA) call-to-action to address the youth sports safety crisis in America. As a medical society interested in the health and well-being of children and adolescents, we are aware that despite the many benefits of exercise, participation in sports and physical activity is not without risk. As noted in NATA's call-to-action, high school athletes suffer 2 million injuries, 500,000 doctor visits, and 30,000 hospitalizations each year. The injuries range from relatively mild sprains and strains to concussions and even death associated with heat exposure and trauma. In the 2008-2009 school year alone, the number of brain injuries (concussions) in high school athletics totaled 400,000. Nearly 75% of players suffering concussions show residual problems with memory and cognition 36 hours after acute symptoms of headache and disorientation have resolved, yet 15.8% of football players who sustain a concussion severe enough to cause loss of consciousness return to play the same day! Even more alarming is the fact that 50% of "second impact syndrome" incidents (brain injury caused from a premature return to activity after suffering initial concussion) result in death. Furthermore, recent evidence with football players suggests that concussions may have adverse cognitive effects that appear later in life.

These statistics support the need for better prevention and treatment to reduce the risk of injuries associated with sports participation. Neither can be attained without proper legislation and appropriate health care professionals in place to ensure optimal care. The North American Society for Pediatric Exercise Medicine joins the **Alliance to Address the Youth Sports Safety Crisis in America** to emphasize the importance of preventing sports-related injuries and improving treatment of these injuries with the goal of facilitating recovery, and ultimately, the optimal health and well-being of our youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Nixon', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Patricia A. Nixon, PhD
President, NASPEM