



The Honorable Seth Grove
Chair, House State Government Committee
House of Representatives
P.O. Box 202196
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2196

The Honorable Margo Davidson
Democratic Chair, House State Government Committee
House of Representatives
P.O. Box 202164
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2164

Dear Representatives Grove and Davidson:

On behalf of Pennsylvania's fitness professionals and Pennsylvania's health and fitness club owners, the PA Fitness Alliance writes to you in support of House Bill 453 and asks for the favorable consideration of the legislation by the House State Government Committee. Like many small businesses across the Commonwealth, the health and fitness industry and its employees were hard hit by the many restrictions placed on the industry and which remain in place. Despite consistently being tied to restaurants, bars, theaters, and live events venues for state closures, gyms have not received the same consideration as these industries when it comes to economic relief. The relief that has been provided has not been widespread and had a limited impact to help those small businesses, many of which have been closed for months due to state and local government mandates. Pennsylvania's health and fitness club owners and their employees seek additional assistance from the Commonwealth. The passage of House Bill 453 and ensuring that the industry can continue to operate in the future is one action the Pennsylvania Legislature can take to support the health and fitness industry, its employees, and its members.

Like you, we appreciate the seriousness of COVID-19 and believe that the health and fitness clubs are part of the solution, not the problem. There has been an assumption that health and fitness clubs are a high-risk environment for the spread of COVID-19 simply because of the activities occurring in health and fitness clubs. With nearly an entire year of data from the industry, which has been verified in contact tracing programs and other professional studies, our experience in Pennsylvania across the nation suggests otherwise:

- A case-control study published in the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#) found that people who tested positive for COVID-19 were more likely to have dined in a restaurant or have had a close contact diagnosed with COVID-19. There was no statistically significant association between COVID-19 test results and visiting a gym.

- According to tracing data reported [by New York](#) state, gyms were the source of just 0.06% of COVID-19 cases. Contact tracing in several U.S. states, including [Colorado](#), [Louisiana](#), [Massachusetts](#) and [Washington](#) also show that health clubs make up a small proportion of total outbreaks and cases.

Evidence shows that physically active lifestyles can improve immune system health and diminish the risk of contracting some communicable diseases, including upper respiratory tract infections. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued guidance on the physical and mental health benefits of being physically active and how individuals can maintain their physical fitness during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, Pennsylvania's Department of Health (in a Tweet in December 2020 just days after ordering gyms and other businesses for three weeks) emphasized the importance of physical activity and physical health during these trying times to improve sleep and reduce feelings of anxiety. You will find attached research from the industry's national trade association, the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) on this matter, but I have highlighted a few of the findings:

- A [study from the Boston University School of Public Health](#) found that depression rates tripled during COVID-19, going from around 8.5% pre-pandemic to 27.8%. One-quarter of young adults (ages 18-24) seriously considered suicide in the 30 days prior to the survey.
- U.S. [data](#) shows health clubs are an important part of consumers' lives and contribute significantly to their mental and physical health.
- According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), people with physical inactivity-related comorbidities, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, and obesity, are at higher risk of developing severe COVID-19 illness resulting in hospital admission, ICU admission, ventilation, or even death.

Health and fitness clubs should be allies to restore the health of Pennsylvanians, and we look forward to working with you and your colleagues to make that a reality. We ask for you, your colleagues, and state policymakers to consider the various reports and official actions supporting the findings that health and fitness centers do not pose an increased risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus when employing adequate safety measures.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact the PA Fitness Alliance (Linda Mitchell at Linda@newtownathletic.com) if we can provide any additional information regarding our support for House Bill 453.

Sincerely,



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