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November 9th, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a board certified pediatrician with over 10 years of clinical experience, currently practicing at MemorialCare Medical Group in Irvine, California . As a primary care physician taking care of patients throughout the difficult times of the COVID-19 pandemic, I have seen the devastating effects it has had on physical and mental health of our public.

It is of utmost importance that we provide opportunities for our community to stay active while still maintaining highest extend of safety precautions. I am writing to advocate for rock climbing gyms to remain open and to increase their capacity when safety criteria are being met.

Climbing gyms differ from standard fitness facilities in many ways and therefore should be considered separately when determining criteria of staying open during the pandemic. This is a non-contact, solo sport with limited periods of heavy breathing. It takes place in large and spacious facilities with high ceilings, open doors and good ventilation system, which help keep density of aerosolized particles at a low level. It is very easy to maintain physical distance while keeping masks on during the entire exercise session. Additional protocols of required hand sanitizing and use of chalk in the form of a liquid dissolved in 70% alcohol, are very effective in limiting the spread of SARS-CoV-2.

Since the start of COVID-19 pandemic primary care doctors have seen the unhealthy increase in BMI, especially among our pediatric population due to lack of options to stay active. The situation will be worse as we go into colder weather conditions, which will make some outdoor sports less feasible.

Thus, it is my strong recommendation that we keep climbing gyms open with appropriate safety measures because they are one of the few tools that we have left to promote physical and mental well-being in our community.

For any questions, please contact my office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Linh Nguyen England', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Linh Nguyen England, MD
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