Gov. Cuomo allows for high-risk sports to be played, if approved locally

Tom Combs, the executive director for Section XI which governs all of Suffolk's interscholastic sports, confirmed that Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo's office has turned over the decision of playing high-risk high school sports to local health authorities. The announcement came earlier Friday.

The governor said such high-risk sports -- which include basketball, wrestling, cheerleading, volleyball and football -- could begin as early as Feb. 1.
"I'm cautiously optimistic that we will be playing what was determined to be high-risk sports Feb. 1," Combs said. "This is an outstanding step in the right direction for our student-athletes. It looks like there is a path to play pending the approval of the Suffolk County Department of Health."

Nassau County Executive Laura Curran, who had previously supported the Let Them Play movement announced that she is ready to resume local high school sports.

"As per today’s announcement by Governor Cuomo, I've directed the Nassau County Health Department to work with school districts to safely resume school sports according to NYS guidance," she said in a statement. "As Nassau County Executive, I’ve continued to advocate for the safe resumption of organized sports, as well as for keeping our businesses and schools open. For many, school sports are a path to promising academic and career opportunities. I’m excited to get our kids back on the fields, courts, and ice rinks they love so much. Let’s play ball!"

Combs verified the news with Dr. Robert Zayas, the executive director of the New York State Public High School Athletic Association.

"Dr. Zayas said it was true and we're moving forward," Combs said. "We have about four weeks to play a winter season for the sports that haven't been able to get started. We'll modify our schedules and get going - this is fantastic."

Combs and the state's executive director's were meeting with Zayas by Zoom this afternoon.

"We're ready to go, our schedules were all set, now we'll modify them and play," Combs said. "Of course, pending the local approval. And this sports season will have no impact on the next season, which will start March 1."

The state also suggests that local health authorities consider the area's rates of transmission and positive tests for COVID-19 and the presence of a more-transmissible variant of the virus identified in the area.