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STEVEN A. BLUMENTHAL  
*Athletic Director*

April 4, 2023

CIAC's Proposal to move North Haven Boys' Ice Hockey to Division 1

Good afternoon. As you may know, yesterday Chris Avena, North Haven Boys' Ice Hockey Head Coach, and I met with an appeals committee at the CIAC office to appeal a proposal by the CIAC Boys' Ice Hockey Committee to move North Haven from Division 2 to Division 1. We prepared and presented the [attached arguments](#). We felt we had a very strong case, with data and precedent, to keep North Haven in D-2. We also included the attached [letter of support](#) from Al Carbone, SCC Commissioner. Despite our efforts, I received a call yesterday afternoon from Henry Rondon, CIAC Assistant Director of Unified Sports/Student Activities and a liaison to several CIAC sports, informing me that we had been denied. I have not yet received the official letter from the CIAC Boys' Ice Hockey Committee that he indicated would be sent to me today.

I feel the need to share with you several elements about yesterday's hearing and the appeal process that do not sit well with me. I don't share these thoughts with you carelessly or without some deep thought. So, I truly hope you take the time to read what I have written. I shared my concerns with North Haven Public Schools Superintendent, Patrick Stirk, and he has expressed full support of what I am about to share with you. Why has he expressed his avid support? Because this one decision by the CIAC Boys' Ice Hockey Committee will affect our student's lives in a very negative way.

First of all, and maybe most importantly, a decision affecting our boys' ice hockey program should have been decided on by the full CIAC Boys' Ice Hockey Committee, a total of 12 voting members (based on my count with [this list](#)). However, this very important decision was decided on by about half of the voting members as you can see from those in attendance (checkmarks) on the list.

Additionally, there were several members of the committee that are connected to teams in Division 2. I am not sure how the presence of these individuals allows for a fair and impartial decision, especially if the schools that these individuals represent will benefit from North Haven being removed from Division 2.

Furthermore, the chair of the committee, Ken Henrici, a non-voting member, shared with us that his sons played for North Haven. In fact, he was very honest and said that when North Haven moved from D-1 to D-2 during his sons' high school playing years, he did not agree with the move. Even though Mr. Henrici is not a voting member, he did express bias against North Haven moving from D-1 to D-2 back in the early 2000's. Now, that same individual who was against North Haven moving from Division 1 to Division 2 is chairing a committee that will determine the future of North Haven Boys' Ice Hockey for years to come. How is this fair?

We feel that despite a strong case with data and precedent, as mentioned above, it felt like a decision was made before we even presented our case. For example, Cheshire Athletic Director, Steve Trifone, shared that after Cheshire experienced three successful years of Division 2 Boys' Ice Hockey, moving to Division 1 "was a disaster." If it was a disaster for Cheshire, a Class LL school who had shown success for three consecutive years, why would anyone want students to have the same experience?

One aspect we shared with the committee was about how a team enters a season with a goal. Team goals typically are based on winning a league or state championship. Although we achieved that goal in Division 2, we expressed concern for our team, our student-athletes, about entering a season in Division 1 with no realistic possibility of winning the Division 1 State Championship. In response, Mr. Henrici, the chairman of the committee, when discussing the need to start a season with a realistic opportunity of being competitive in the Division 1 CIAC tournament with a goal of winning a championship, his response was "do you really think Notre Dame-Fairfield or St. Joseph's have a realistic chance of winning the state tournament?" In fact, the committee chair proceeded to say he would rather have a record of 10 wins and 10 losses in Division 1 than win a state championship in Division 2. These brutally honest comments demonstrate that there is no consideration of the student-athlete's experience which contradicts the CIAC Mission. Furthermore, it clearly illustrates that the process and the participants have bias.

In closing, we have serious questions about how such a strong case with data and precedent could be so disregarded. I was not provided any rationale for the decision, other than what was originally told to me, "Tournament Success." The process is not fair and impartial. The individuals involved in the process, those mentioned and several who have not been mentioned, have issues with North Haven Boys' Ice Hockey and our head coach, Chris Avena. How can this decision that will affect North Haven Boys' Ice Hockey for years to come be decided by people who will benefit from our move to Division 1? I certainly look forward to reading your response on these concerns.

Sincerely,

Steve

Steve Blumenthal, CAA  
Director of Athletics  
North Haven Public Schools

**NORTH HAVE HOCKEY TEAM  
PARENT ASSOCIATION  
203-215-7707**

April 6, 2023

*Via email at [glungarini@casciac.org](mailto:glungarini@casciac.org)*

Connecticut Interscholastic Connecticut Conference  
Attn: Glen Lungarini  
Executive Director

Dear Mr. Lungarini

I am writing on behalf of the parent association of the North Haven hockey team. As a parent to two out of the fifteen players, myself, and other parents have concerns regarding your decision to move the North Haven hockey team to Division I.

It is my understanding the CIAC proposed to move the North Haven hockey team to Division I based on their record from the past two years. Our coach, Chris Avena, and our athletic department appealed the proposal and the CIAC decided to move the North Haven hockey team to Division I for the 2023-2024 academic year.

We take exception to the CIAC's decision and would argue against moving the hockey team to Division I for the following reasons.

The CIAC Ice Hockey Committee is made up of twelve independent individuals to assess and review a potential team's record over the past year in determining if a move to a higher division is fair and equitable. What is your criteria in deciding what team is moved up to Division I? Like a courtroom setting, I presume committee members, like a jury of the peers, consist of unbiased individuals and a majority vote determines the deciding factor. Coach Avena had an opportunity to argue his appeal to negate a move to Division I. Although the committee is made up of twelve individuals, only five individuals were present at the meeting. Furthermore, three of the five committee members are from districts that recently competed for the Division II State Championship title with the North Haven hockey team. One could argue these committee members are biased against North Haven and would like to see the team move to Division I. If a majority of unbiased votes is necessary in the deciding factor to move a team to a higher division, it remains unclear how the meeting with Coach Avena was fair and equitable. This process and corum for voting mandates the presence of at least six committee members that remain unbiased in their deciding vote. The committee presented to Coach Avena was prejudicial and lacked an equitable opportunity for our team to bring forth concrete arguments why the 2023-2024 North Haven hockey team shall remain a Division II team within the CIAC. An equitable process would mandate at least six committee members to be present during oral argument in appealing the process of moving the team to Division I.

The CIAC exists to assure quality experience that reflects high expectation standards with fairness, equity and sportsmanship for all student-athletes. What does that mean? What is the CIAC striving for to serve its student-athletes? Our impression is the CIAC is striving to provide fairness across the playing field. North Haven successfully completed the 2022-2023 season with a state title. Although the record is impressive, 70% of our scoring were scored by graduating seniors. Of our returning players, only three of the players had substantial playing time. In fact, the majority of the players did not benefit from ice time during the games and played intermittently at best. These players did not appreciate being in the crux of the game and being completely prepared to play. Watching and cheering their teammates this past season demonstrated that hard work and experience pays off. Asking our players to now step on the ice and play regularly in games even in Division II will prove to be an insurmountable obstacle for the players to overcome. The majority of the incoming juniors and sophomores did not have the opportunity to play in the games on a regular basis and played intermittently at best. To compete in Division II will require these players to work hard, persevere and demonstrate dedication during the off season. A task, although daunting, they are prepared to fulfill. Bringing these players to a higher, more competitive playing field, will only demoralize their confidence. These players are not prepared or ready to make the move to Division I. Not only are the players unprepared, the junior goalie is not in a position to move to Division I. The junior goalie only played two games his entire high school career. To prepare himself to step into the crease of a D1 net, the goalie would have to vigorously prepare himself with regular private goalie lessons for the next seven months. A financial endeavor his parents cannot afford and this would add more stress to the goalie and his family alike.

A successful season is not a season that the team dominates the division and wins the state championship. While it is a team's ultimate goal to win it is not the primary focus. The CIAC exists to assure quality experiences that reflect high ethical standards and expectations of fairness, equity and sportsmanship for all student-athletes. We are in agreement with these bylaws and we want our team to strive on and off the ice. We want our team to demonstrate perseverance, a moral work ethic and experience the success you gain from giving your best. If this team moves up to Division I, they will demonstrate perseverance, dedication and hard work without the benefit of success. A successful season includes a fair amount of wins, loses and ties. It is where the student-athletes learn from their hard work and mistakes. They learn empathy. These qualities are life lessons that the students will use after high school. If we make it where the student-athletes try their best and never succeed, it would demoralize their confidence and their desire to even try. Does the CIAC want to affect our students' mental health in such a way that their inequitable experience as a Division I team would transition to their academia and life outside of sports? This would place added stress and anxiety our children already experience as a high school student, young man and teenager in today's environment. We just want our children, our athletic students to have an opportunity to be successful as described herein. Given the talent and more importantly the past experience of the North Haven hockey players for the 2023-2024, this goal would only be attained if they stay as a Division II team.

In reading the bylaws of the CIAC we as parents, appreciate that the CIAC serves to provide sportsmanship, equity and fairness with all the student-athletes. The upcoming North Haven hockey team should be afforded the opportunity to have the chance of winning a game once they step on the ice. Likewise, the competing team should also be afforded the same

opportunity. If our team remains as a Division II hockey team, this fairness and equity would be executed on both sides the competing teams. Moving North Haven hockey team to Division I hockey would negate the intent of the CIAC. As parents, coaches, athletic directors and committee members we have to appreciate the expectation a teenager puts oh himself to succeed in a sport, in school and even in life. As adults, it is our responsibility to ensure that our children are afforded the opportunity in fairness, perseverance, hard work and sportsmanship. Demoralizing a young man's confidence and effecting his mental health over the next six plus months, is not a road we wish to travel.

In an effort to carry out your bylaws and provide a quality experience for these young men that builds confidence, aspires sportsmanship and demonstrates expectations of fairness and equity, we respectfully ask that you reconsider your decision to move our team to Division 1 for the upcoming 2023-2024 hockey season.

On behalf of the parent association, your kind attention on this matter and reconsideration of your decision is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Ann Marie Keaney, Esq.

cc: Ken Henrici (via email at [khenrici@casciac.org](mailto:khenrici@casciac.org))  
Henry Rondon (via email at [hrondon@casciac.org](mailto:hrondon@casciac.org))



Glenn Lungarini &lt;glungarini@casciac.org&gt;

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**North Haven Concern**

4 messages

**Glenn Lungarini** <glungarini@casciac.org>

Mon, Apr 17, 2023 at 11:38 AM

To: "Henrici, Kenneth" &lt;khenrici@parishill.org&gt;

Cc: Henry Rondon &lt;hrondon@casciac.org&gt;, Gregg Simon &lt;gsimon@casciac.org&gt;

Hello Ken,

North Haven High School has contacted me with several concerns regarding the hockey committee's recent decision to move them from Division II to Division I. Among these concerns are the criteria used by the committee when moving a team up a division and bias demonstrated by you as the committee chair.

Regarding bias, North Haven has claimed that during their appeal, you were very honest and said that when North Haven moved from D-1 to D-2 during your sons' high school playing years, and that you did not agree with the move. North Haven claimed that even though Mr. Henrici is not a voting member, you expressed bias against North Haven moving from D-1 to D-2 in the early 2000s. Please respond and inform me whether or not North Haven's claim that you interjected personal experiences from when your son attended the school during their meeting.

Regarding moving a team's designated division. CIAC bylaws prohibit a sports committee from arbitrarily placing teams in divisions outside of their appropriate division based on enrollment. Any sport using schools of choice or success factor criteria in establishing divisions must establish and approve that criterion. I have reviewed the CIAC Hockey packet and do not see any criteria to alter divisions. Please inform me of the process and pre-established criteria the hockey committee used to alter divisions.

Thank you for your prompt attention and response, as I need to get back to the North Haven administration.

Thank you,  
Glenn

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Dr. Glenn M. Lungarini  
Executive Director  
CAS-CIAC  
(203) 250-1111

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**Henrici, Kenneth** <khenrici@parishill.org>

Mon, Apr 17, 2023 at 2:11 PM

To: Glenn Lungarini &lt;glungarini@casciac.org&gt;

Hi Glenn,

Thanks for your e-mail. I must say I'm surprised by North Haven's persistence in this matter and more important, some other concerns that I will share with you.

First, I am very concerned about confidentiality. Whenever committee discussions regarding divisional placement, probation, and tournament prohibition, etc. take place, there is an assumption that total confidentiality will be maintained. This is to ensure candid discussion of matters without concern of any leaks. It is evident that someone on the committee shared confidential information with North Haven officials. This has a chilling effect on free and open discussion of important matters. An unacceptable precedent to set.

Second, information that breached confidentiality was also inaccurately conveyed to North Haven officials. What was accurate was that when I was a voting member in about 2010-2011 (after my younger son who also played North Haven hockey graduated), I voiced my opinion that North Haven should not move down to Division II from Division 1. My logic was that it was better to have a .500 won-loss record and play against the best teams, than to have a .900 record in Division II against less talented teams. The committee voted to move North Haven to Division II anyway, a decision that I respected. Most recently, I used that same logic not only for North Haven's appeal, but also for Woodstock Academy's and Newington's appeal. Furthermore, I distributed the attached criteria above for all committee members, including the CIAC Liaison, to review prior to the appeal votes on every school. North Haven's appeal was rejected unanimously, on a motion by Steve Ricchitelli. I have been informed that North Haven even went so far as to contacting an attorney to appeal the Hockey Committee's decision, which to my knowledge they cannot do. Also, to my knowledge, all of the other schools accepted the committee's decision.

I would also like to voice my concern not only about confidentiality, but also free speech. If committee members are reluctant to have candid conversations about controversial agenda items, the committee cannot function as effectively as it should. I have worked very hard to ensure transparency on this committee and promote a sport that I played in high school and college and one that I love. I am North Haven's biggest fan; but I cannot in good conscience support placing a school that went 24-2 with a feeder system of 400 players in Division II.

I will call you to follow up on this e-mail. Thanks.

Ken

[Quoted text hidden]



**Suggested Criteria for Considering Divisional Placement.pdf**

14K

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**Glenn Lungarini** <glungarini@casciac.org>  
To: "Henrici, Kenneth" <khenrici@parishill.org>  
Cc: Gregg Simon <gsimon@casciac.org>

Mon, Apr 17, 2023 at 5:52 PM

Dear Ken,

The alleged bias expressed by North Haven came from the comments you made in the presence of North Haven officials during the appeals process. As such, I don't know what you are referencing regarding confidentiality. Second, the document you shared of suggested criteria for divisional placement is not part of the hockey packet, was not approved by the hockey committee, nor does it comply with CIAC bylaws governing divisional placement for tournaments. I will review these actions and determine the next steps.

Thank you,  
Glenn

[Quoted text hidden]

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**Henrici, Kenneth** <khenrici@parishill.org>  
To: Glenn Lungarini <glungarini@casciac.org>

Tue, Apr 18, 2023 at 8:12 AM

Dear Glenn,

I left a message with Judy yesterday afternoon. I will call you this morning to discuss this. Thanks.

[Quoted text hidden]



Glenn Lungarini &lt;glungarini@casciac.org&gt;

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## Conversation about North Haven Hockey

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**Randi Petersen** <rmp0810@yahoo.com>

Fri, Apr 14, 2023 at 9:48 AM

Reply-To: Randi Petersen &lt;rmp0810@yahoo.com&gt;

To: Glenn Lungarini &lt;glungarini@casciac.org&gt;

Cc: Patrick Stirk &lt;stirk.patrick@northhavenschools.org&gt;

Hello Glenn,

Thank you for your prompt response, it is appreciated.

I would be happy to meet with you and our Superintendent, Mr. Patrick Stirk, at your earliest convenience. While you have received a letter from our Athletic Director, we would like to meet with you to discuss the perspective and concerns of the North Haven Board of Education before your committee discusses this further and/or a final decision is made.

I have cc'd Mr. Stirk on this email so we can hopefully land on a date and time that works for all of us. I have my spring break the week of April 17th and will have a lot of flexibility in my schedule. Please let us know what works for you and any of your committee members you would like to join the conversation.

We look forward to meeting with you.

Best,

**Randi Petersen**

*North Haven Board of Education*

*Athletic Committee, Chair*

*"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." ~Maya Angelou*

[Quoted text hidden]



**Some Suggestions for Criteria to Consider for Divisional Placement:**

- Overall team records
  - Overall team records against same divisional opponents
  - Numbers of players returning next season, number of players graduating/leaving for other schools
  - Feeder systems to school; Learn-to-Skate/youth programs
  - Demographics of schools
  - Ability to draw from multiple versus single towns
  - Length and hours of ice time for practice for team
  - Does school have JV and freshman team
  - Number of players on team rosters
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Most important: The hockey committee should strongly consider all the above criteria, but final decisions should be subjective in nature after considering all of the above criteria

Ken Henrici