



April 29, 2020

RE: Public Health Need to Open Swim Schools and Learn-to-Swim Programs

Dear Governor Newsom,

We are writing to ask you to consider the serious public health need to open swim schools and learn-to-swim programs in Stage 2 of businesses to reopen.

As you know, learning to swim is a life-or-death skill, essential for every child. Formal swim lessons between ages 1 and 4 can help reduce the risk of drowning by 88% according to a study conducted in 2015.¹ Drowning is the number one cause of death for children ages 1 to 4 and a leading cause for young people up to 14 years of age.² We believe drowning to be at an even higher risk now as the schools, daycares and other children's activities are currently closed. This gives children more time to find a body of water such as a backyard pool, neighbor's pool, community pool, inflatable pool, sink, toilet, filled bathtub, bucket, ditches filled with rainwater, ocean, lakes, and rivers. A young child can drown in less than 2 inches of water.³

Meanwhile, parents have even more distractions than ever, including remote working while children are home and are unable to supervise their children at all times. Even before this pandemic, 9 out of 10 child related drowning deaths happened when a caregiver was supervising.⁴ 69% of children who drowned were not expected to be at or in the pool, yet they were found in the water and 77% of drowning victims had been out of sight for less than five minutes.⁵

Private swim schools in California educate over 80,500 children per week to learn to swim and unlike public pools, our programs are controlled learning environments. We understand that modifications will need to be put in place once swim schools/learn-to-swim programs reopen. While an instructor needs to stay within a reachable distance from a nonswimmer, we are committed to taking concrete steps to ensure social distancing within all other aspects of our facilities.

There is no way to teach water survival or swim skills remotely, and the health risk from COVID-19 in instructional settings should be very low. According to the CDC, the chlorine/bromine in our swimming pools

¹ Association Between Swimming Lessons and Drowning in Childhood, A Case-Control Study: Ruth Brenner, et al., 2015 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4151293/>

² <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/campaigns/drowning-prevention/Pages/default.aspx>

³ https://downloads.aap.org/DOPA/Drowning-Prevention/is_your_baby_crawling_english.pdf

⁴ Research from National SAFEKIDS campaign, <https://www.cnn.com/2004/HEALTH/05/27/drowning/>

⁵ Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) <https://www.momsteam.com/sports/swimming/safety/grim-statistics-on-child-drownings>

should inactivate the virus in the water. Chlorine/bromine is a disinfectant. There is no evidence that the virus that causes COVID-19 can be spread to people through the water in pools. The industry is working to establish best practices, and we are willing to engage in a science-based dialogue with health officials regarding which measures would be appropriate for learn-to-swim programs.

As a fellow parent of young children, we hope you will agree that teaching swimming is essential to keeping our children safe. If you have any questions, we would be more than happy to answer them, please contact Lisa Zarda, executive director for the United States Swim School Association at lisa@usswimschools.org or 480-447-4987. We look forward to working together to reduce the risks to our children and communities. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Signatories

Lisa M. Zarda, CAE
Executive Director
United States Swim School Association

Adam B. Katchmarchi, Ph.D., EMT-B
Executive Director
National Drowning Prevention Alliance

Sabeena Hickman, CAE
President & CEO
Pool & Hot Tub Alliance

Michelle Kavanaugh
Executive Director
California Pool & Spa Association

Christy Bostic
Executive Director
Hope Floats Foundation

Jim Speirs
President
Stop Drowning Now

FINIS Inc., Alameda County

Splash Swim School, Contra Costa County

Waterworks Aquatics, Orange County, San Diego, Pasadena, Los Angeles, Santa Clara and San Francisco Counties

American Swim Academy, Alameda and Contra Costa Counties

Carson Swim School, Brentwood and Contra Costa Counties

WarerSprites Swim School, Butte County

Sherman Swim School, Contra Costa County

Steve Wallen Swim School, El Dorado Hills, El Dorado, Roseville and Placer Counties

Australian Swim Schools Inc., Orange and Los Angeles Counties

America's Kids Swim School, Fresno County

Jamie's School of Fish, Fresno County

American Kids Sports Center, Kern County

LA Surf and Swim, LA County

Academy Swim Club, Los Angeles County

KidSwim, Los Angeles County

South Bay Aquatics, Los Angeles County

Westside Aquatics, Los Angeles County

Deep Blue Swim School, Los Angeles County

Lucky Duck Swim School, Los Angeles County

Swimming LA Swim School, Los Angeles County

Kswim schools, Los Angeles County

Makai Swim School, Napa County

My Swim Buddy, Orange and Los Angeles Counties

Aqua Duks Swim School, Orange County
AQua Wave Swim School, Orange County
Blue Buoy Swim School, Orange County
Evolution Swim Academy Mission Viejo, Orange County
Watersafe Swim School, Orange County
Wild Child Water Play, Orange County
Swim to Shore Swim School, Riverside County
The Aquatic Zone, Riverside County
Little Whale Swim School, Sacramento County
The Northern California Swimstitute, Inc., Sacramento County
Boost Swim School, Sacramento County
Aqua Pros Swim School, Inc., San Diego County
San Diego Swim School, San Diego and Riverside Counties
Kilmer's Swim Time, LLC, San Diego County
Legacy Swim Academy, San Diego County
Sunsational Swim School, San Diego, Los Angeles, Orange, Contra Costa, Alameda, Ventura, Riverside, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Sacramento, Marin and San Bernadino Counties
5 Cities Swim School, San Luis Obispo County
Aqua Sports Swim Academy, San Mateo County
King's Swim Academy, Inc., San Mateo County
La Petite Baleen, San Mateo and San Francisco Counties
AnT swim school, Santa Clara County
AVAC Swim School, Santa Clara County
Sutton Swim School, Santa Clara County
The Swim Pro, Santa Clara County
Simi Valley Aquatics, Ventura County
Daland Seim School, Ventura County
SwimAmerica - Davis, Yolo County