



MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN

For Immediate Release:
Monday, January 20, 2020

**ON THE OCCASION OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY,
MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN
WAS JOINED BY ELECTED OFFICIALS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS
ADDRESSING INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE
INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS**

Mayor Brown, “On this historic day, that marks the celebration of all that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stood for, let us do something extraordinary. On behalf of all Buffalo student athletes, let us find a prompt, equitable, and inclusive resolution to this important matter.”

Earlier today, Mayor Byron W. Brown was joined by New York State Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes, Senator Tim Kennedy, Buffalo Common Council President Darius Pridgen, Buffalo Public Schools Representatives, Hall of Fame Running Back Thurman Thomas, Buffalo Bills Alumni, following the decision by the Section VI Football Federation and Erie County Interscholastic Conference’s determination to exclude students from the City of Buffalo to compete against their neighbors in interscholastic athletics.

Mayor Brown’s Prepared Remarks are as Follows:

“Good morning, I’m joined by our Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes, State Senator Tim Kennedy, Buffalo Common Council President Darius Pridgen, a great friend to our City, Thurman Thomas, other Buffalo Bills alumni, coaches of our City High School football teams, coaches from other teams in the County, and community leaders to be a voice in favor of finding a way to ensure our student athletes are able to compete at the level they deserve to during the upcoming high school football season.

“As we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day it is fitting that we recall his words, “The time is always right to do what is right.” Today, we are calling on those who are empowered to do what is right by

our high school athletes to come together and find a way to resolve this situation so that our young people have the same opportunities to play as they did before.

“There is still time for our Buffalo Public School leaders, Section VI Football Federation officials and the Erie County Interscholastic Conference policymakers to come together to either preserve federation competition or include our five high school teams in the conference’s 2020 football season.

“Doing so will cement the advances we all have made in promoting diversity, equity and inclusion goals across Western New York. When we embrace these values, especially in the context of education and school sports, we communicate how vital these principles are to the prosperity of our City and region and the formation of our next generation of leaders.

“For 105 years, City schools participated in the Harvard Cup league. And while that heritage is important to Buffalo and helped foster friendly rivalries across the district, we made the difficult decision to dissolve the league and join the Section VI Football Federation in order to promote the best interests of our children.

“Joining Section VI allowed the City’s athletes to participate in sectional and statewide championship level play, receive greater exposure to collegiate scouts and develop robust schedules. Simply reinstating the Harvard Cup league is not possible. In the ten years since the league has been dissolved the local, regional and statewide competitive landscape has simply changed too much to take this significant step backwards.

“Our student athletes are vital members of the community. Sports helps provide students with valuable life lessons concerning discipline, teamwork, fair play and overcoming obstacles. For many of the young men who play football, their participation in the sport provides opportunities for higher education that they would not have had otherwise. And those athletes who do go on to play at higher levels provide vital support to the schools and communities they came from through mentoring, philanthropic giving and coaching.

“It is for these members of the community, many of whom are too young to vote and whose voices were not included in the recent Section VI decision, that all of us are gathered here now. I hope and believe there is a way to resolve this situation in a manner that preserves the integrity of our decade-long collaboration, the dignity

of our students, and the shared aims of the federation and conference leaders. It is simply a matter of finding our way forward, something Buffalonians have always been able to do. In a proud

democracy like ours, we are at our best when ordinary people join together to do something extraordinary. On this historic day, that marks the celebration of all that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stood for, let us do something extraordinary. On behalf of all Buffalo student athletes, let us find a prompt, equitable, and inclusive resolution to this important matter.”

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