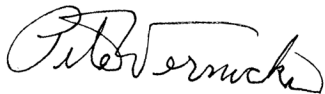

March 18, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

The Red Cross is issuing this letter of support for the provision of Water Safety Instructor training and Water Safety instruction at aquatic facilities. The Red Cross strongly supports the provision of water safety instruction including learn to swim and water competency as a necessary component to safe aquatic activity. In addition, as with education of other professionals and especially education around safety functions, the in-person education and competency evaluation of Water Safety Instructors is essential to assure performance in preventing drowning and injuries, effective education and successful action should occur emergencies occur. Lastly in-person education of individuals in water safety including safe aquatic activity, water competency and swim instruction is essential for a multitude of essential public health reasons. These include reducing drowning risk as increased numbers of people return to aquatic activities in the months ahead especially after having been away from aquatic activity and instruction in safe activity for over a year. There have also been the well-studied concerns for children's mental health and physical activity because of the necessary restrictions put in place this past year. With the nationwide emphasis on return of children to education, we also recognize the importance of a return to physical activity as essential for our children, but we need to assure it occurs safely and in a structured way.

The Red Cross has issued guidance for minimizing the risk for COVID-19 transmission while conducting the American Red Cross Water Safety Instructor, Water Safety and Learn to Swim Programs during the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance is in full compliance with CDC recommendations and reinforces requirements to also comply with state and local public health orders and guidance. Instructors and aquatic facility managers can provide a copy of this guidance on request. The guidance includes a revised instructional plan that implements a combination of precautions to minimize risk of exposure, including social distancing, use of personal protective equipment and modifications to skills and activities as applicable. This guidance is constantly reviewed by the American Red Cross Scientific Advisory Council to assure it is based on the latest evidence and CDC guidance.

We strongly support allowance of Water Safety Instructor training, Water Safety instruction and learn to swim programs. We appreciate your support of the importance of aquatic safety and structure safe education to mitigate drowning risks and return children to educational activities that include physical activities. If you should have any questions or need further information, please feel free to contact Dr. David Markenson at david.markenson@redcross.org



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