Greetings 4-H Families and Stakeholders,

We hope you are all remaining safe and healthy. As promised, we are sharing our latest summer program updates with you. We are encouraged that Maryland’s key COVID-19 health metrics continue to trend in a positive direction. Our Governor reminds us that:

While our numbers continue to trend in a positive direction, we are seeing rapidly rising case numbers in states all across the country…It is vital that Marylanders remain vigilant, wear face coverings, wash their hands, and practice physical distancing so that we can continue on our road to recovery.

Maryland is continuing to progress within Stage Two of the Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery plan, with local jurisdictions making decisions within these parameters. As a reminder, this stage also advises that Marylanders (a) stay home as much as possible, (b) telework wherever possible, (c) wear face coverings in public areas, (d) practice physical distancing, and (e) and avoid crowds and close gatherings. This stage allows for limited youth activities for small groups with strict public health protocols.

The University of Maryland Extension (UME) 4-H program has carefully reviewed the guidance developed by the Governor’s office, UMD College Park, public health officials, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, and have engaged in key discussions with state fair leadership, fair superintendents, and campus administration. We have come to the very difficult decision to suspend 4-H’s **in-person** participation in the 2020 Maryland State Fair. We greatly value our partnership with the State Fair and are currently working with the Fair and key stakeholders to discuss the possibility of a virtual option for indoor exhibits. Should the State Fair transition towards virtual livestock show opportunities, 4-H will certainly look to collaborate with our State Fair partners.

We based our decision on the following challenges and concerns:

- The health and safety of Maryland 4-H youth, families, volunteers and staff
- The difficulty in solidifying a mitigation plan that adheres to the UME 4-H limitation of group size to 10 individuals or fewer during fair/show activities and conduct of 4-H activities in a protected area away from the general public
- The uncertainty of when large group gatherings can safely resume while following youth program safety standards and the difficulty in excluding 4-H participants from the general public
- Concerns related to the comfort level of our fair superintendents, judges, staff, volunteers and families to attend an in-person fair
- Concerns around acquiring additional support in terms of personnel, materials and resources needed to safely engage in in-person activities and shows
• The need to provide timely decisions and clarity at the local level for planning purposes
• Several summer and fall national 4-H and FFA related competitions and activities, which are interrelated to the state 4-H/FFA competitions typically held at the fair, have been postponed, transitioned to a virtual platform and/or cancelled

We will continue to listen to and work with our team and families as we prepare to slowly resume approved in-person programs on August 1st. We will update you on summer program opportunities and decisions regarding our virtual engagement with the state fair. Maryland 4-H will continue to support the youth of our state as they grow and thrive during this challenging time. Thank you for your continued support and engagement in the UME 4-H Youth Development program!

Regards,

Craig Beyrouty                         Jim Hanson                                      Nia Imani Fields
Dean and Director                    Associate Dean and                         Assistant Director and 4-H Program
                                     Associate Director                               Leader