# 5th Region Advocacy for the 2027-2028 School Year

**As the only Eastern Standard Time school in the 3rd Region, this request is rooted in student academic impact, community experience, and operational safety, not competitive advantage.**

## ***Student Experience***

**• Academic impact of late returns**
Approximately 80 percent of Meade County's away regional contests require late-night travel, with student-athletes frequently returning home at or after midnight on school nights. In contrast, Meade County's middle school athletic programs are aligned with geographically closer Region 5 schools to limit travel, allowing students to return home earlier, arrive at school rested, and be prepared for a full day of learning. This contrast highlights an ongoing academic impact tied to regional alignment rather than isolated scheduling decisions.

**• Reduced participation for non-varsity student-athletes**
Extended travel distances and time zone challenges frequently result in canceled junior varsity and freshman contests, limiting participation, development, and equitable access to athletics. These cancellations are a recurring consequence of regional geography, not local scheduling choices.

**• Limited student, band, and cheer engagement**
Distance and late start times associated with regional sites significantly limit student section, pep band, and cheer participation, diminishing the full educational and student experience of athletics. Alignment with closer schools would support broader student involvement.

## ***Community Experience***

**• Community access and travel patterns**
According to Meade County Workforce Development data, the majority of Meade County families and community supporters work along the I-65 corridor in Louisville, Elizabethtown, Fort Knox, and Southern Indiana. Travel to many 3rd Region schools requires extended trips outside this corridor, limiting attendance and community engagement.

**• Geographic and time alignment of regional communities**
Meade County operates within the Eastern Standard Time footprint of Central Kentucky, while the remaining schools in the 3rd Region are aligned with Central Time communities and different geographic centers. This difference impacts when families can attend events, how communities travel, and how regional competitions are supported. Alignment with the 5th Region places Meade County within a region that shares similar orientation and expectations.

**• Natural rivalries and shared community identity**
As a former 5th Region school, Meade County's athletic rivalries are there where geographic proximity supports consistent attendance, shared traditions, and meaningful community engagement that strengthen school pride and connection.

## ***Safety and Operations***

**• Travel efficiency and proximity of regional opponents**
In the 5th Region, approximately **61%** of member schools are within a 100-mile round-trip travel distance from Meade County, compared to only **29%** in the 3rd Region. This disparity highlights significant differences in travel efficiency that affect safety, scheduling reliability, and operational sustainability.

**• Late-night travel impact on transportation staff**
Extended travel distances regularly place bus drivers on the road late at night, often returning well after midnight, while still reporting early the next morning to support daily transportation needs for students. Reducing excessive travel supports driver safety, preparedness, and student well-being. Travel to Meade County is equally difficult for the other 3rd Region schools.

**• Officials' availability and time zone challenges**
Securing officials for contests in Meade County is increasingly difficult due to long travel distances and time zone differences, resulting in a limited pool of 3rd Region officials willing to travel to Meade County. Alignment with closer schools could improve officials' availability and consistency across contests.