



Dear High School Unit Presidents and Dignitaries,

I'm writing to talk to you about the **Ref Union Cares** program, as you may have seen circulating via e-mail, on social media, or through our recent mention in Referee Magazine.

Ref Union Cares, in a nutshell, offers financial assistance to referees needing it to get through the COVID-19 pandemic and work stoppage. Our network of assignors have already sent out nearly **\$10,000 in interest-free loans to our union members**.

I'm **not** asking for a donation or contribution. Thanks to our members and [GoFundMe campaign](#), our treasury is replete with what we need to last us for at least two more months.

I'm writing to you because I am disappointed in the meager outreach performed by high school associations to their members during a time when many referees are struggling. It feels like unless there are games to fill or a camp to push upon us, assignors and organizations sit callously on the sidelines. I want to challenge you guys to get into the game.

The **Ref Union Cares** initiative is just one example of how to go about it. High school units all have treasuries and unless you really go extravagant at your end-of-the-year banquet, that treasury should have a healthy balance. It is money that is sitting there for whatever reason, maybe some of it is earmarked for scholarships to camps that probably will not even happen this summer.

I propose that you guys **put that money to work**. Let it be accessible to referees that may need it, not as handouts but as short-term loans, while referees search for avenues to make up the lost income from amateur sports completely shutting down.

There are several of you that have expressed interest in launching such a program but have reservations as to its inviolability. The only way for such a plan to work is if you guys all play nice and work together. Loans come with risks. If a referee borrows from one unit, there's theoretically nothing stopping him from jumping ship to the neighboring unit and failing to pay the money back. Your associations would have to communicate about such matters. That said, I really think that such a danger is exaggerated. In 10 years, I've only been screwed over financially by two referees. As a group, referees are pretty good at paying people back, provided that you're careful about who you loan money to in the first place.

In any case, I hope this is a cause you guys would consider picking up. At the very least, I hope you guys are doing **something tangible** to help your referees during this pandemic. Lazily e-mailing them info about unemployment insurance is frankly not enough. You guys are leaders; you guys were elected to serve. We always ask referees to give back to the game. This is **our time** to give something back to the referees.

If you have any questions about the [Ref Union Cares program](#), it's logistics, or if you just want to brainstorm some ideas with me, I'm available at your beck and call. I hope you guys are staying safe, staying sane, and making the most of this time spent at home.

Cheers and well wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CB', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Chris Balasinski

[Ref Union.net](http://RefUnion.net)