

Richard A. Bennett
Senator, District 18



3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

**Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services on
LD 2230, An Act to Change Department of Health and Human Services Rules
Regarding Youth Camps to Major Substantive Rules
March 5, 2024**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: I am Senator Rick Bennett of Oxford, and I have the honor of serving 14 communities in Western Maine in the State Senate. I am pleased to cosponsor LD 2230, “An Act to Change Department of Health and Human Services Rules Regarding Youth Camps to Major Substantive Rules.”

There are more than 145 summer camps in Maine. A good percentage of those are located in my district. The camps provide life transforming youth development experiences for kids from Maine and around the globe. Maine camps provide thousands of jobs and generate more than \$250 million for Maine’s economy and \$25 million in tax revenue.

While the safety of campers should be our top priority, sweeping changes regulating such an industry should not be taken lightly. When the latest changes were proposed, very anxious representatives from at least 10 summer camps in my district contacted me in a panic. They told me that they would not be able to comply with the new regulations and would be forced to close this year and perhaps indefinitely.

I urged them to submit testimony and was pleased to learn that the Health Inspection Program’s proposed changes to 10-144 CMR Ch. 208, Youth Camp Rule will not affect camps this summer. However, simply pushing off the changes for a year is not sufficient.

Major substantive rules include rules that “because of their subject matter or anticipated impact, are reasonably expected to result in significant increase in the cost of doing business.” Overly burdensome rules that cause camps to go out of business would certainly fit in that category.

In the past, the HIP engaged with camps on rulemaking to ensure that the highest level of safety could be provided and that the changes could be implemented and not overly burdensome. That was not the case this last time around. Because of this collaboration, Maine’s regulations have been used by the American Camp Association and replicated in other states across the country.

The Legislature should review rule changes for an industry that plays such a large role in our state’s economy. I strongly urge you to support LD 2230 and appreciate your consideration.