

Nichols, Jackson

From: Kyle Courtiss <kyle@campvega.com>
Sent: Monday, March 4, 2024 9:47 AM
To: HHS
Subject: LD 2230

This message originates from outside the Maine Legislature.

Dear Members of the HHS Committee,

I hope this message finds you well. My name is Kyle Courtiss, and I am one of the owners and directors at Camp Vega in Fayette, Maine. Our camp is located in Fayette, Maine which has a population of approximately 1100 people. Vega proudly serves 300 girls aged 7-15 during our 6.5-week overnight program. Additionally, we employ 200 staff members, mainly between the ages of 18 - 22 years old, from across the United States and the world.

I am writing to you today regarding LD 2230, "An Act to Change Department of Health and Human Service Rules Regarding Youth Camps to Major Substantive Rules." While I understand the significance of asking the Legislature to elevate the Chapter 208 rule from "routine technical" to "major substantive," I firmly believe it is the only viable course of action to prompt the DHHS to withdraw the current rulemaking and engage in a collaborative dialogue with representatives from youth camps.

Over the past two months, Maine youth camps, including Camp Vega, have diligently submitted comments on rulemaking and engaged with our representatives in Augusta. Despite our efforts, the DHHS, particularly the HIP program, has regrettably declined to embrace the historic collaborative approach that has guided our interactions for the past five decades. The joint endeavors of the department and the Maine Youth Camp Association have yielded regulations that stand as the gold standard in the summer camp industry, often emulated by other states.

It is deeply concerning that Maine youth camps have been excluded from the recent rulemaking process, which includes proposals that would lead to a more than 40% increase in critical violations (from 140 critical violations in the current rules to 224 in the proposed rules), all formulated without the input of youth camps.

I am unsure about the viability of every camper and staff member involved in Maine summer camps if the multitude of drastic changes are adopted. I believe disregarding our input could destroy that viability. I respectfully urge you to consider the gravity of this situation and adjust LD 2230 from "routine technical" to "major substantive" in order to determine best industry practices through the collaborative spirit that has made Maine summer camps leaders in this industry.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical matter. I would be more than happy to speak further about any details or questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Kyle Courtiss

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