



**Testimony on behalf of  
The Connecticut Recreation and Parks Association, Inc.  
Before the Committee on Children  
March 2, 2021**

**HB 6511 - An Act Requiring Background Checks for  
Youth Sports Coaches, Trainers and Instructors**

The Connecticut Recreation and Parks Association, Inc. (CRPA) is a nonprofit charitable organization. Our mission is to support the recreation and park profession and steward the future of public parks and recreational opportunities in Connecticut in order to promote active lifestyles, livable communities, and quality of life for all who call Connecticut home. CRPA represents over 750 individual professionals from municipal, nonprofit, and private, park, recreation, and camp organizations, as well as over 130 of the 169 municipal park and recreation departments in Connecticut.

For over 70 years, ensuring that children have the greatest opportunity to safely participate in physical activity has been central to CRPA's mission. Consequently, CRPA supports state and national criminal background checks and state sex offender registry checks for coaches that are paid employees. Further, CRPA believes these checks are sufficient and act as a deterrent from predators trying to join our professionally run programs.

CRPA does not support the fingerprinting initiative outlined in the bill as it limits a municipality's ability to conduct an RFP process to contract out with a third-party entity and receive competitive pricing, it pigeonholes municipalities into a fixed, statutorily set cost of \$88.00 which can increase at any time, outside of our control. Basically, the state is setting themselves up to be a monopoly on background checks. The Commissioner of OEC stated herself at the February 18<sup>th</sup> Committee on Children public hearing that this fee used to be \$12.00 and was increased to \$88.00 to generate revenue for the state.

First, park and recreation department programs have suffered greatly this year due to the COVID mandated state shutdown. Programs could not run and those that were able to saw decreased participation. This drastically and adversely impacted revenue. Couple that with increased costs due to the pandemic such as set ratios by OEC, increased supply needs for PPE, and the phase in of minimum wage, municipalities do not have the resources to comply with this new unfunded mandate at this time. The Governor's budget which, with the exception of federal CARES funds, largely flat-funds municipalities further exacerbating this situation.

Second, this will likely increase the per-person program registration fee and decrease the availability of access to affordable recreational opportunities. This furthers the income divide with regard to access to sports.

Thirdly, access to fingerprinting is also a deterrent to employment. Most of our coaches work for us as a secondary job during nights and weekends and cannot get fingerprinting done during that timeframe. Therefore, in order to work as a coach, they would now need to take time from their primary job to comply.

Further, section f subsection (1), lines 80 through 83 allowing for a 180-day separation to exempt a returning coach from having to complete another background check is not a sufficient amount of time. For example, a basketball coach may only be employed for 3 months and then has 9 months of separation. Therefore, the number of days should be no less than 280 days.

Finally, the turnaround time on the results of the state police fingerprinting is currently over 8 weeks and the turnaround time for DCF is currently about 3 weeks however their website states up to 4 weeks. Park and recreation departments do not have enough paid coaches on staff to ensure that everyone whose results are pending are supervised by someone whose results are returned as cleared. The increased demand on the state system will surely increase these timeframes.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to working with the committee on this important issue.

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CRPA Executive Director