

Committee on Children JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-215

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH CAMPS.

Vote Date: 3/12/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/29/2024

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Committee on Children

CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Kadeem Roberts, 137th District.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would impose requirements on how youth camps are inspected, to establish the Youth Camp Safety Advisory Council within the Office of Early Childhood, to require youth camps to submit annual reports and to permit the denial of a youth camp license if the applicant has had a license for a youth camp revoked in another state.

This would make youth camps safer for children by providing more oversight, as well as more heavily document the individuals responsible for children while at camp.

The substitute language clarifies camp licensure and time frames thereof.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

NOTE: TESTIMONY MAY NOT REFLECT CURRENT LANGUAGE OF THE BILL

[Office of the Child Advocate, Child Advocate, Sarah Healy Eagan](#): supports this bill which will ensure timely inspections of newly licensed camps, institute a camp safety advisory council, and ensure the Office of Early Childhood can deny a license to a camp who had their license revoked in another state. They offer any consultation from the OCA that the committee deems helpful.

[Office of Early Childhood, Commissioner, Beth Bye, and Director of the Licensing Division, Liz Proietti](#): states that they recommend changing the timeframe to inspect newly licensed youth camps from no later than 48 hours after the licensee commenced operations to no later than 72 hours after the licensee commenced operations since the first day is often not indicative of day-to-day operations. They also state that requiring the licensee to submit an annual report on how the camp was operated, staffed, and supervised and how the camp responded to medical and safety incidents during the year, is duplicative of information they already capture through licensing inspections and investigations.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Connecticut Camping Association, President, Camp Chinqueka, Co-Director, Jane Bielefield](#): supports this bill and requests that the bill reflect the nationally recognized organizations that already offer accreditation to some camps and work closely with the Office of Early Childhood. They also state their concerns about the timing of the youth camp advisory councils meeting schedule and the number of positions needed to reach a quorum, as well as the annual report mentioned in this bill. They believe that there is no more information to gain with regards to staffing, operation, supervising, and reporting of medical incidents.

[Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs, John L. Cattelan, Camp Hazen YMCA, Associate Executive Director, Katherine Davies, Connecticut Rivers Council: Boy Scouts of America, Director of Support Services, Sean Fogle, and Connecticut Camping Association, First Vice President, Member of the Youth Camp Safety Council, Camp Director Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp, Heather Logee](#): supports this bill but has concerns over appointing a representative from the Connecticut Parks and Recreation Association since they are exempt from licensing requirements. They state that unlicensed camps should be required to report an incident at the end of the summer to the Office of Early Childhood and should be required to disclose their unlicensed status on their websites.

[Ebner Camps inc, CEO, Owner, Kristin Ebner Martin](#): supports this bill and requests changing the language specifically in section 2, subsection b, numbers 2 through 4 from "any" to "an" to say "an additional member appointed by the commissioner to fill the needs of the council based on expertise in the field". That change would require appointees to have knowledge of summer camp operations.

[Connecticut Council of Small Towns, Executive Director, Betsy Gara](#): states that they request an amendment to include representatives from municipalities including a representative from a small town, on the safety council.

[Emily Peterson](#): supports this bill because youth camps can be places where groomers take advantage of children and begin to traffic them.

[Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, Advocacy Manager, Lindsay Seti](#): supports this bill and requests that two appointments be added to the Youth Camp Safety Advisory Council; one representing municipalities with over fifty-thousand residents and one for municipalities with less than fifty-thousand residents.

[Connecticut Recreation and Parks Association, Executive Director, Valerie Stolfi Collins](#): supports this bill and recommends appointing three representatives to the Youth Camp

Safety Advisory Council; one to represent municipalities with a population less than twenty-five thousand, one representing a municipality with a population between twenty-five thousand and fifty thousand, and one representing a municipality with a population of more than fifty thousand.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Horizons, Director of Camp and Facilities, Scott Lambeck](#), and [Youth Camp Advisory and Safety Council, Past Chair, Chris McNaboe](#): opposes this bill because they don't understand why the House of Representatives and Senate are choosing who is on the YCSAC. They also have concerns over the 10-person quorum and the annual report that they state would be full of information they have already provided.

[Bill Dudley](#): opposes this bill because historically, youth camps have been a place for indoctrination and intolerance.

Reported by: Patrick Buckley

Date: 3/18/2024