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# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



Beth Bye  
*Commissioner*

**Testimony of Beth Bye, Commissioner, Office of Early Childhood  
Before the Committee on Children  
H.B. 6574 – An Act Concerning Municipal Youth Camps  
Tuesday, February 7, 2023**

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Good afternoon, Senator Maher, Representative Linehan, Senator Seminara, Representative Dauphinais, and distinguished members of the Committee on Children. I am Beth Bye, Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). I am submitting testimony concerning **H.B. 6574 – An Act Concerning Municipal Youth Camps.**

The Office of Early Childhood appreciates the intent of this proposal to require license-exempt municipally operated youth camps to become licensed by the OEC. Connecticut's youth camp statutes and licensing regulations work to ensure the health and safety of children. Our licensing inspectors work closely with youth camps to ensure they understand the need for and adhere to these licensing requirements. At times, we communicate with local officials to address health and safety concerns related to such things such as sanitation or fire safety.

Youth camp licensing ensures accountability and oversight of baseline standards in critical areas such as abuse and neglect, staff-child ratios, staff qualifications, health care, and physical plant safety. Children served by licensed-exempt programs do not benefit from the same level of health and safety protection offered through licensing activities such as criminal record checks, local approvals, licensing staff monitoring, and investigation of complaints.

There are state fiscal considerations to this proposal. Since the Office of Early Childhood does not license municipal youth camps, we do not know the number of such camps that operate throughout the year. Of the 169 municipalities in Connecticut, we can assume that a large number offer one or several youth camp opportunities in their community. The number of municipally operated youth camps could be substantial.

If the OEC took on licensing of municipal youth camps, our agency would need to hire additional licensing, legal, and background check staff. For context, the OEC currently licenses about 500 youth camps and employs three full-time and 10 seasonal licensing staff. There are also other costs that would be incurred, such as state agency vehicles, cell phones, iPad, etc.

We also acknowledge there would be fiscal considerations for municipalities operating youth camps as our licensing requirements may necessitate additional costs to come into compliance.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer your questions now and/or at a later date. The OEC is committed to work together—with legislators, the executive branch, providers, advocates, and parents—to better serve our families with young children.

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