Maryland Youth Camp Safety Advisory Council

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April 3, 2019

RE: Annual Report on Youth Camps for 2017 & 2018

Dear Secretary Neall:

The Maryland Youth Camp Safety Advisory Council is a Governor-appointed board of camp professionals, public health experts, and concerned citizens who advise and assist the Maryland Department of Health in developing regulations for camps. This letter fulfills the Council's obligation (pursuant to Health-General § 14-404) to provide you with information for the summers of 2017 and 2018 regarding the number of youth camps, facilities and campers in our state. Attached you will find the report supporting these requirements.

In 2017, there were over 2,500,000 camper days and in preliminary data for 2018 there were also over 2,500,000 camper days in Maryland. A camper day is defined by each day a camper attends a summer camp (day or overnight).

Camps provide much needed child care, supervision and access to nutrition when school is not in session, which in turn creates a safer community. Maryland has comprehensive regulations protecting the health and safety of children attending these programs (Code of Maryland Regulations 10.16.03, 10.16.06, and 10.16.07). To ensure these critical safety regulations are met, the committee makes the following recommendations:

1. The Council strongly recommends that Maryland continues to fully fund the Youth Camp Program. Annual inspections of camps require staff and resources. There were 815 certified camps in 2018. As camps are seasonal, the need for inspectors is also seasonal, with most of the direct costs incurred towards the end of the fiscal year. During times of budget shortfalls, it may look attractive to cut from these budgets, but doing so is at the risk of the health and safety of Maryland youth.

2. Ensure the Department has all the resources to continue their online data collection and data entry efforts. Over the past few years, the Department has created and improved an online licensing and reporting system. This online system is used by camps for more efficient processing, status updates, and data collection. Camps are required to complete an end-of-season report and incident reports

for serious accidents and incidents that affect camper health. Collecting these reports online saves time and reduces the amount of manual data entry by the Department, which in turn will provide the Department and this Council with more up-to-date information on trends in injuries and illnesses. In addition, it allows the Department and this Council to focus its resources on areas outside of data entry.

3. Improve the compliance of unlicensed camps by providing expertise to those camps beginning the licensing process. The process of becoming licensed can initially seem overwhelming for new camps. Ensuring the Department has adequate staff and resources available to assist new camps with obtaining a license will facilitate compliance and a safer camp community.

4. Educate the community about the licensing process. Many parents are not aware that Maryland requires youth camps to be licensed. Some cost effective ideas to educate the public are to:

    a. Provide an online database of camps that are licensed;

    b. Use public service announcements; and

    c. Create a logo that licensed camps can use in their marketing materials.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Public Representative
Council Co-Chair

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CC: MDH Center for Healthy Homes and Community Services

Attachments