



Rhode Island Department of Human Services

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Office of the Director

Kimberly Merolla-Brito

April 16, 2026

The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee
Chair, House Committee on Judiciary
State House
Providence, 02903

RE: H8091 and H8092 – An Act Relating to Health and Safety – Licensing of Youth Camps

Dear Chair McEntee,

On behalf of the Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS), I am writing to express support for H8091. This proposed bill would align the implementation of youth camp licensing requirements within the operational and statutory framework of the Department of Human Services (DHS).

The proposed changes in H8091 will ensure that, as DHS assumes responsibility for the regulation and licensing of youth camps, the Department is able to maintain the same established workflow used for the licensing of child care centers and family child care homes when responding to concerns involving child abuse or neglect. DHS has clear procedures for coordinating with the appropriate state partners when allegations arise in licensed child care settings, and it is critical that these same processes apply to children participating in licensed summer camp programs.

Without these statutory adjustments, DHS could face inconsistencies in how reports are received, reviewed, and referred that could create confusion for providers, families, and state agencies– potentially delaying the response to concerns regarding the safety of children. Aligning the effective dates and statutory framework for youth camp licensing allows DHS to integrate camps into the existing child care licensing and investigative structure in a way that supports continuity, clarity, and timely protection of children.

Importantly, DHS also recognizes and is in support of H8092 as a complementary measure to H8091. Both of these bills support building the statutory framework needed and effective oversight of youth camps, aligning efforts from both the Department of Human Services and Department of Children, Youth, & Families in the implementation of youth camp licensing across the state.

Through the passage of these bills, DHS will be able to ensure reporting standards, expectations, and interagency coordination follow established processes when DHS begins regulating youth camps in January 2027. Maintaining a consistent workflow across all regulated out-of-home care settings is essential to protecting children and to ensuring providers understand their responsibilities under the law.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or need any additional information.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Merolla Brito

Kimberly Merolla-Brito
Director

RI Department of Human Services

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Judiciary
The Honorable Justine A. Caldwell
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel for the Speaker of the House of Representatives
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy