

Committee on Children JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6952

AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN RECREATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL

Title: CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS.

Vote Date: 3/6/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/20/2025

File No.: 235

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Patrick S. Boyd, 50th District

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Committee on Children

REASONS FOR BILL:

This Legislation seeks to regulate unlicensed camp programs in the state. It would require further background checks and it would update mandated reporter provisions relating to child neglect and abuse. Further, it would require OEC to adopt regulations on staff-to-children ratios and prohibit the unlicensed camps from advertising as a "youth camp."

The S language clarifies language around "camp" regarding advertising and that the 3rd party conducting the background check does not need to be approved by OEC. And it removes the staff ratio of one person of at least 18 years old for every 12 children to 1:12 regardless of age.

HB 6952 seeks to alleviate many of the concerns around unlicensed camps and bring their regulation up to par with many other camps in the state. Many of the changes to this bill are already followed by licensed camps of OEC. This ensures all parents have access to safe and secure camps throughout the state regardless of licensure status.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[CT Office of Early Childhood, Commissioner, Beth Bye](#) notes the longtime interest in bringing municipal youth camps under regulatory framework, emphasizing that safety is paramount.

The OEC supports the language related to DCF mandated reporter training, even potentially incorporating it into OEC youth camp regulations. This legislation takes a step in the right direction as far as staff/child ratios but falls short of OEC regulatory standards.

[External Affairs, Judicial Branch, State of CT](#) speaks specifically referring to section 2b of the bill, "We presume this is in reference to the Judicial Branch's criminal case search on our public website. If that is the case, the results of a search will not provide all of the information identified in the section. The site only contains convictions from the last ten years. Additionally, one cannot search by the full date of birth, only by the year of birth."

[Office of the Child Advocate, Acting Child Advocate, Christina Ghio](#) expresses support of section 2 noting how relevant background checks will provide meaningful protection and mitigate safety concerns. OCA also urges the committee to ensure the bill requires checks of the DCF Child abuse registry for all employees over 18. Current law exempts certain childcare providers from background checks, OCA urges the committee to allow for children of all camps to see the benefits of these background checks.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[CGA, State Representative, Kerry Wood](#) opposes this bill. And adds that this bill unfairly imposes requirements on municipal recreational programs while exempting private entities, which could jeopardize essential services for families. While I support the bill's intent to improve safety and quality, both municipal and private programs should be held to the same standards.

[Town of East Hartford, Mayor, Connor S. Martin](#): opposes this bill but specifically Section 3, as it would drastically reduce our hiring pool by requiring a 1:12 staff-to-child ratio with only employees over 18, eliminating vital job opportunities for teenagers. East Hartford's Municipal Summer Recreation Programs provide affordable, safe activities while also serving as a crucial first employment experience for local youth, nearly 50% of whom are ages 15-17. We propose adjusting the requirement to a 1:24 ratio for staff over 18 while maintaining a 1:12 overall ratio, ensuring continued access to youth employment and essential community programs.

[COST, Executive Director, Gara Betsy](#) notes "parks and recreation departments are very concerned that municipalities will be forced to eliminate, cut back, or increase costs for children's programs due to the administrative requirements mandated under the bill." Certain municipal programs are also required by the CT Office of Early Childhood to pass a safety inspection that encompasses relevant staff certifications. COST also urges CT to ensure that funding is made available to streamline the staffing approval process.

[Connecticut Camping Association, President, Jane Bielefield](#) expresses support noting her extensive summer camp experience. She then noted her lack of opposition for municipal camps but her concerns for the areas of oversight due to lack of regulation. She acknowledges that there are some programs are safe but there are they are not held to the same standards that licensed camps are. Since the services offered are free there should be no issues with staffing.

[CT Alliance of YMCA's, VP-Government Relations John Cattelan](#) expresses support noting the fundamental purpose of the bill being to keep children safe. Background checks being paramount to this, as child sexual abuse is not rare, and abusers seek out opportunities to be exposed to children. 12:1 staffing ratios are important to safety due to its implications regarding supervision, especially if an emergency takes place. Proper First Aid and CPR training mandates are important, unlicensed camps need to have established standards to ensure safety.

[Hazen YMCA, Senior Program Director, Nicole Fauteux](#) expresses support noting that every child deserves to attend a safe summer camp, and every parent has the right to know and trust their children's program. The current exemption for municipal agencies creates an oversight gap that must be fixed in order to ensure an "even playing field".

[CAPSS, Executive Director, Fran Rabinowitz](#) expresses support noting how the legislation aligns with CAPSS priorities. This legislation is "a sensible child focused approach to enhancing the safety, quality and accountability of children's recreational programs throughout Connecticut".

[Soundview Family YMCA, Camp Director, Lynn A Wheeler](#) expresses support noting the ways YMCA already conducts itself in a way like what the legislation outlines. Background checks, CPR and First Aid mandates, and maintaining a 12:1 ratio is important to keeping children safe.

[Central Connecticut Coast YMCA, President and CEO, Timothy Bartlett](#)
[Lakewood-Trumbull YMCA, Executive Director, Andrew Bramlett](#)
[Camp Hazen YMCA, Associate Executive Director, Katherine Davies](#)
[YMCA Camp Sloper, Outdoor Center Director, Justin Hubeny](#)
[Camp Hazen YMCA, Assistant Camp Director, Alex Learned](#)
[Camp Hazen YMCA, Executive Director and CEO, Denise Learned](#)
[YMCA Stratford Branch, Executive Director and CCC, Suzanne Richards](#)

Supports this bill and add that municipal camps in Connecticut are currently exempt from the safety regulations that licensed youth camps must follow. This gap in oversight leaves children in exempt programs without essential protections like background checks, proper staff-to-camper ratios, and staff training. They urge that this bill is an essential step to having all camps meet basic safety standards.

[Ayden Quilter](#): supports this bill and as a high school student, they have had personal experience with toxic coaches and how he was told that one coach was never background checked and was an alcoholic; constantly under the influence during practice. He urges passage of the bill and the need for background checks.

[Ebner Camps Inc., CEO, Kristin Ebner Martin](#): Supports this bill and adds that they feel like this bill can provide safety and well-being to children attending any type of summer camp program.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Town of Essex Park – Recreation, Director P-R-Social Services, Mary Ellen Barnes](#)

expresses opposition noting multiple concerns regarding increased strain on low-cost summer childcare programs. If this legislation were to pass there would be a large financial impact on municipalities, making it more difficult these camps to operate. This would not only create a burden for these camps but the parents as well.

[Town of East Haddam, Director of Recreation, Lisa Conroy](#) expresses several concerns, particularly that the bill unfairly targets municipal programs while exempting private organizations, such as Scouts and YMCAs, which lack the same level of oversight. Programs already conduct background checks for staff, and the new requirements would lead to increased costs, delays, and logistical challenges. Additionally, the proposed effective date of July 1, 2025, would disrupt summer planning, as promotional materials are already in production. The bill could also reduce available programs and enrollment slots, negatively impacting families who rely on affordable childcare.

[Rocky Hill Parks - Parks and Recreation, Director of Parks, Craig Bowman](#) expresses opposition noting the positive business practices municipal camps have. Municipal camps already have multiple areas of oversight to maintain checks and balances like HR departments, risk managers, and other local governing entities. Craig then expresses multiple concerns related to the age, certification and vetting of program staffers. 70% of the current age of Parks and Rec Department's employees are 16-18 years old, this provides an opportunity to shape today's youth. This employee pool will shrink if that range is reduced to 18+. Craig urges the committee to vote down on the bill and promote equity for all programs equitably.

[Town of Southington, First Selectman, Danielle Chesbrough](#) expresses opposition, noting concerns about raised costs for municipal youth camps, making them less affordable for families. The bill introduces unnecessary state oversight on camps, which already face local regulation, leading to increased costs that would limit access to affordable childcare. Municipal camps are already subject to multiple layers of oversight and meet health and safety standards, making additional requirements duplicative.

[East Haddam Parks and Recreation, Director of Recreation, Lisa Conroy](#) expresses opposition, noting that the bill unfairly targets municipal programs while exempting private organizations, such as Scouts and YMCAs, which lack the same level of oversight. The department already conducts comprehensive background checks for staff, and the new requirements would lead to increased costs, delays, and logistical challenges. The bill's mandate would also limit employment opportunities for 16-17-year-olds, reducing the hiring pool and potentially compromising safety, which the bill aims to improve. Additionally, the proposed effective date of July 1, 2025, would disrupt summer planning. The bill could also reduce available programs and enrollment slots, negatively impacting families who rely on affordable childcare. Given the department's existing safety measures and operational standards, Lisa urges the committee to vote down this bill.

[Enfield Recreation Dept., Recreation Manager, Alison Alberghini](#)

[Haddam-Killingworth Recreation, Director of Recreation, Robyne Brennan](#)

[Town of Hebron, Parks and Recreation Director, Craig Bryant](#)

[Town of Groton, Town Manager, John Burt](#)

[Plymouth Parks and Recreation, Director, Maureen Cappetto](#)

[Town of Harwinton, First Selectman, Michael Criss](#)
[Berlin Parks and Recreation, Superintendent of Recreation, Debra Dennis](#)
[Retired Parks and Recreation Professionals, Christy Dlugolenski](#)
[Glastonbury Park and Recreation, Recreation Supervisor, Bill Engle](#)
[Darien Parks and Recreation Dept., Jennifer Fava](#)
[Town of Avon, Director of Recreation and Parks, Jennifer Filer](#)
[South Windsor Parks and Recreation, Assistant Director, Nathan Foley](#)
[Brookfield Parks and Recreation, Recreation Supervisor, Daniel Gagne](#)
[Cheshire Parks and Recreation, Director of Parks and Recreation, John Gawlak](#)
[Guilford Parks and Recreation, Director, Pamela Gery](#)
[Suffield Parks and Recreation, Commissioner, Jacquelyn Guzie](#)
[Suffield Parks and Recreation, Assistant Director, Daniel Leonard](#)
[Suffield Parks and Recreation, Director of Special Programs, Donna Carney Bastrzycki](#)
[North Branford Parks and Recreation, Director, Kerry Haynes](#)
[Town of Ellington, Director of Recreation, Dustin Huguenin](#)
[Ledyard Parks and Recreation, Director, Scott Johnson](#)
[Town of Mansfield, Director of Parks and Recreation, Jay Keefe](#)
[Town of Suffield, Director of Community Services, Peter Leclerc](#)
[Southbury Parks and Recreation, Parks and Recreation Director, Meghan Lennon](#)
[Town of Killingly, Parks and Recreation Director, Bucky Lohbusch](#)
[Town of Glastonbury, Town Manager, Jonathan Luiz](#)
[Town of Glastonbury, Recreation Supervisor, Liz Gambacorta](#)
[Town of Salisbury, Director of Recreation, Lisa McAuliffe](#)
[Town of Seymour, Director of Community Services, Mary McNelis](#)
[Wallingford Parks and Recreation, Director of Parks and Recreation, Kenny Michaels](#)
[Town of Simsbury, Director of Parks and Recreation, Thomas Tyburski](#)
[Town of Simsbury, Town Manager, Marc Nelson](#)
[New Britain Recreation Dept., After School Program Coordinator, Maggie Winiarski](#)
[Town of South Windsor, Director of Parks and Recreation, Molly Keays](#)
[Town of Newtown, Director, Matt Ariniello](#)
[Newtown Community Center, Instructor, Jennifer Cebry](#)
[Newtown Parks and Recreation, Director of Parks and Recreation, Amy Mangold](#)
[Newtown Parks and Recreation, Assistant Director of Recreation, Connor Negri](#)
[Town of Farmington, Kathleen Blonski](#)
[Town of North Branford, Program Coordinator, Sarah Brown](#)
[Marlborough Parks and Recreation, Recreation Director, Ray Bull](#)
[Town of Kent, Park and Recreation Director, Matthew Busse](#)
[Town of Bolton, CT, Recreation Director, Stephanie Crane](#)
[Newington Parks and Recreation, Superintendent, Bill DeMaio](#)
[Town of Portland, Director of Parks and Recreation, Andy Dionne](#)
[Town of South Windsor \(Retired\), Retired Director of Parks and Recreation, Ray Favreau](#)
[Town of Rocky Hill, Recreation Supervisor, Logan Gauvin](#)
[Town of Rocky Hill, Aquatics-Recreation Supervisor, Nick Pizzoferrato](#)
[Madison Beach and Recreation, Recreation Supervisor, Carrie Gazda](#)
[New London Recreation, Recreation Supervisor II, Tara Hannaford](#)
[Town of Branford, Director, Dale Izzo](#)
[City of Middletown, Director, Cathy Lechowicz](#)
[Town of East Lyme, Director, Jerry Lokken](#)
[Town of Waterford, Director of Recreation and Parks, Ryan McNamara](#)

[Town of Monroe, Parks and Recreation Director, Missy Mendygral Orosz](#)

[Town of Salem, Recreation Coordinator, Agnes Miyuki](#)

[Town of Oxford, Director of Parks and Recreation, Kyra Nesteriak](#)

[Town of Burlington, Director of Parks and Recreation, Tricia Twomey](#)

[Trumbull Parks and Recreation, Noreen Wilpiseski](#)

[Town of East Hartford, Mayor, Connor S. Martin](#)

Oppose this bill because it would make municipal summer camp programs less affordable and accessible for working families without significantly improving safety. The bill imposes stricter regulations on community parks and recreation agencies while exempting private organizations, creating an unfair burden. Additionally, new staffing requirements would make it harder to recruit qualified employees, potentially leading to program cancellations, higher costs for families, and fewer job opportunities for younger staff.

[Brookfield Resident, Maria Nuefeld:](#)

Opposes this bill and says this bill imposes restrictions that disproportionately burden municipal programs by prohibiting the hiring of high school students, increasing staffing costs, and adding excessive administrative requirements. The bill also enforces unfair program naming restrictions and stricter compliance measures that do not apply to private organizations, creating an uneven playing field. These changes could lead to fewer affordable childcare and recreation options, higher fees, and unnecessary barriers for families in need of accessible community programs.

[Citizen, Jean Coville Dawe:](#)

Opposes this bill because they say it negatively affects teenagers who want to get involved in camps and they say that there will also be a cost factor. They conclude that we need teens in camps to help.

[Larkin, Jennifer:](#)

Opposes this bill for myriad of reasons, specifically, unfair restrictions, burdening essential services, threat to affordability and an overall increase in costs for families. They urge opposition to this bill.

[CCM, Advocacy Manager, Hannah Lemek:](#)

Opposes this bill and states that this bill signals out municipal programs. This puts on undue restrictions on the camps, and this would hurt many camps throughout the state. They review the bill and summarize their opposition to section 1 and sections 2 – 5 of the bills.

[Newtown Community Center Commission, Chair, Kinga Walsh:](#)

opposes this bill and says that this bill unfairly targets municipalities that offer low-cost programs. They also add that it incurs larger financial burdens on these programs and would eliminate substantial amount of employment opportunities for teens. She urges opposition of the bill.

[KPRD, Board Member, Lori Zornado:](#)

Opposes this bill and argues that this bill unfairly targets municipal programs while excluding private camps & organizations such as scouts, YMCAs, and other programs. They add that they already do much of what the bill adds and that this would be an unfair burden.

[CRPA, Executive Director, Valerie Stolfi Collins:](#)

Opposes this bill and argues that the bill would increase administrative costs, reduce affordable childcare, and summer programs, and create staffing shortages, ultimately forcing municipalities to cut or eliminate essential services. They emphasize that municipal programs already implement rigorous safety measures, including background checks and CPR-certified staff, and that the proposed mandates would place an unnecessary financial and operational burden on local governments.

[HK Recreation Department, Recreation Supervisor, Josselyn Salafia:](#)

Opposes this bill argues that this bill should apply to both public and private entities. She adds that this would impact on teen employment, and the implementation timeline would cause serious issues. They urge opposition to this bill.

[Preston Parks and Recreation, Director, Mark Simmons:](#)

Opposes this bill and asks questions to why they must be mandated to follow this bill but not their private counterparts. They add that this bill would seriously worsen their camp operation and severe loss of high school employment.

10 Anonymous submitted testimony in opposition to the bill.

Reported by: Tucker Carroll, Christian Talarski, & Alex Sferrazza Date: 3/31/2025