

Written Testimony in Support (FAV) of HB 1041

Chair Bagnall and Members of the Committee:

My name is Patrick Marsh, and I am writing in support of HB 1041 on behalf of the Campaign for Camp Safety and as the father of Sarah Marsh, one of the 27 girls and counselors, known as Heaven's 27, who lost their lives at Camp Mystic in Texas during the Hill Country floods on July 4, 2025.

Sarah was a joyful, vibrant young girl who loved everyone she encountered. Like so many parents, we trusted that when we sent her to camp, she would be safe. We trusted that the adults responsible for her care had properly assessed risks and put the necessary safeguards in place. Tragically, that trust was misplaced. The cabins where the girls were sleeping were located in a known flood hazard area along one of the most dangerous flash-flood corridors in the United States.

What makes this tragedy even harder is that it was preventable.

In response to what happened on July 4th, the Texas legislature enacted the Heaven's 27 Camp Safety Act and the Youth CAMPER Act to strengthen protections for children attending summer camps. Those reforms include prohibiting camps from placing sleeping cabins in flood-prone areas. A similar bill, the Sarah Marsh Heaven's 27 Camp Safety Act, has passed the Alabama House and is currently before the Alabama Senate. These bills will save lives!

HB 1041 takes a similarly practical and commonsense step here in Maryland. It prevents the Maryland Department of Health from licensing youth camps when camper housing structures are located in flood hazard areas. This is not about burdening camps. It is about ensuring that children are not sleeping in places where known environmental risks can turn deadly in minutes.

Summer camp is a cherished American tradition. The goal of the Campaign for Camp Safety is not to undermine that tradition, but to preserve it by ensuring camps are truly safe places for children.

No parent should have to experience what our families have endured.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 1041 so that Maryland can take proactive steps to protect children before tragedy strikes.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,



Dr. J. Patrick Marsh
3728 Crestbrook Rd.
Birmingham, AL 35223