



Written Testimony – Favorable with Amendments

House Bill 1041 – Youth Camps – Structures in Flood Hazard Areas – Prohibition

House Health Committee

Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 1041. I would like to begin by thanking Delegates Spiegel and Lehman for their leadership in bringing forward this important conversation about camper safety and for their open dialogue on this matter.

My name is Andy Shlensky, and I serve as a Board Member and Government Relations Chair of the American Camp Association (ACA). ACA is a national youth-serving nonprofit organization dedicated to enriching the lives of children through the camp experience and supporting camps in providing safe, high-quality programs.

The American Camp Association believes that the physical and emotional safety of campers and staff is fundamental to every camp experience. ACA supports camps through well established standards, accreditation, and educational resources that promote continuous improvement and proactive safety practices. We encourage collaboration between regulators and ACA to incorporate proven standards and expertise that help ensure a high level of care and well being for campers and staff.

We appreciate the intent of House Bill 1041. Camps play an important role in communities across Maryland, serving thousands of families each year and contributing significantly to the state's economy and workforce. Maryland has more than 1,500 identified camp operations, including approximately 1,435 camps offering day programs and about 100 offering overnight programs.

Protecting children and staff from potential flood hazards is an important goal, and camps share the commitment to ensuring that facilities and operations are designed with safety as the highest priority. Protecting children and staff from potential flood hazards is an important goal, and camps share the commitment to ensuring that facilities and operations are designed with safety as the highest priority.

As currently written, the bill would prohibit the Maryland Department of Health from issuing or renewing a certificate for a youth camp if any structure used to house campers is located within a FEMA designated flood hazard area. While well intentioned, this approach creates a blanket prohibition that does not account for site specific safety planning or mitigation measures that camps may have in place. Floodplain maps often cover broad geographic areas and do not always reflect the actual operational risk of a specific location. As a result, the bill could unintentionally affect camps that have safely operated for decades with established emergency preparedness plans, evacuation procedures, and responsible facility design. For this reason, the American Camp Association respectfully recommends several targeted amendments that would preserve the bill's intent while allowing for practical, safety based implementation.

First, we recommend clarifying that the restriction should focus on riverine floodways or active river flood corridors, which is a FEMA distinction regarding where floodwaters move with greater velocity and present the highest risk. It is important to distinguish these areas from the broader FEMA mapped floodplain, which may include locations with significantly lower risk profiles. Many camps are intentionally located near lakes, reservoirs, or other still bodies of water that provide opportunities for swimming, boating, environmental education, and outdoor recreation. These environments may fall within mapped floodplain areas even though



they do not present the same risks associated with active river flooding. Allowing appropriate review and mitigation planning in these areas would maintain safety while preserving the educational and developmental benefits of the camp experience.

Second, we recommend replacing the blanket prohibition with a risk based mitigation pathway and allowing site specific risk review by the appropriate state authority. Camps may be able to demonstrate that appropriate flood risk mitigation measures and emergency preparedness plans are in place to protect campers and staff. Camps that can demonstrate protection from floodwater impacts, reliable evacuation routes, and effective emergency communication procedures should be able to operate safely under those conditions.

These amendments would maintain the focus on safety while recognizing the realities of how camps are located and operated. Safety in youth camps is achieved not only through geography, but through planning, training, preparedness, and responsible facility management.

The American Camp Association looks forward to working collaboratively with the bill sponsors, the Maryland Department of Health, and this committee to ensure that the final legislation both protects campers and reflects the practical safety standards used across the camp industry.

Thank you for your consideration. I respectfully urge a favorable report with amendments to House Bill 1041.

Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andy Shlensky". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

**Andy Shlensky**

*American Camp Association*

*Board Member & Government Relations Chair*