



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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

Health Committee
March 10, 2026

INFORMATIONAL

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is James Torrence, and I serve as Executive Director of the Maryland Alliance of YMCAs, representing six independent Y associations serving children and families across Maryland. Collectively, our Ys **serve 421,346 Marylanders**, from early childhood through older adulthood.

Maryland Ys and Y-affiliated programs operate across **12 jurisdictions**, providing safe, stable, and affordable care that supports working families and children’s development throughout the State. This footprint reflects sustained investment in quality programs and the Y’s role as a trusted provider, with **more than 130 Maryland EXCELS-licensed childcare and Head Start programs**. In addition, Ys **partner with 200 local schools and leads 28 community schools**, supporting student success through wraparound services, enrichment, mentorship and family engagement. **More than 52,000 children** are served annually through Y childcare, afterschool, and summer programs.

YMCA camps serve thousands of children and families each year through residential and day camp programs that offer outdoor recreation, youth development, and connection to nature. The safety of campers and staff—particularly during severe weather events—is a responsibility we take very seriously.

While we share the goal of strengthening safety and preparedness, HB 1041 would prohibit the Maryland Department of Health from issuing or renewing a youth camp certificate if any structure used to house campers is located in a flood hazard area. This broad prohibition raises significant concerns. Many camps across Maryland like camps across the country are intentionally located near lakes, rivers, and coastal environments because water-based recreation and environmental education are core components of the camp experience.

Partners such as the **American Camp Association (ACA)** have raised concerns that the bill does not exempt **ocean and lakeshores from the floodplain provisions**, which could unintentionally affect camps that responsibly operate in those environments. A blanket prohibition tied to flood-hazard mapping could disrupt long-standing youth programs that already follow rigorous safety and emergency preparedness standards.

For these reasons, we believe a more constructive and collaborate path forward is **HB 937**, which establishes a **workgroup to examine youth camp emergency preparedness** with input from camp operators, safety experts and State agencies. This is the best path to bring stakeholders together in a thoughtful way and ensure future policies reflect operational realities.

It will also be important that the workgroup reflects the **full range of camp experiences**, including **day, overnight and travel programs**.

The Y movement stands ready to work with the General Assembly and stakeholders to strengthen safety while preserving access to the outdoor experiences that are so important to youth development.

Thank you for your consideration.

Point of Contact

James Torrence
Executive Director, Maryland Alliance of YMCAs
jamestorrence@ymaryland.org