



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



Public Hearing - March 12, 2010
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Amey W. Marrella
Department of Environmental Protection

Senate Bill No. 384 (RAISED) - AN ACT CONCERNING REIMBURSEMENT TO MUNICIPALITIES FOR THE COST OF RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES IN STATE PARKS

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding Senate Bill No. 384 (RAISED) - AN ACT CONCERNING REIMBURSEMENT TO MUNICIPALITIES FOR THE COST OF RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES IN STATE PARKS. This bill proposes to have the Commissioner of Environmental Protection (Department) provide for the reimbursement of necessary costs incurred by a municipality when police, paid fire or ambulance service of a municipality services responds to an emergency in a state park.

Since emergency responders throughout Connecticut have the ability to seek reimbursement for their services from the caller's medical insurance, the Department believes this legislation is not needed.

With the advent of the cell phone anyone one can initiate an emergency response call from just about any place in the state. The Department has no control over who might initiate a 911 call from a cell phone within a state park. Most of the calls made to 911 call centers for emergency medical services are made by citizens who believe they are in need of medical services and typically do so without attempting to first engage the assistance from state park staff. While this may be a reflection of diminishing state park staff resources, the Department believes this is more reflective of the proliferation of cell phone technology and the emergence and evolution of the public's knowledge and expectation of Connecticut's 911 emergency response systems.

Connecticut's 107 state parks and 32 forest recreation areas create a host of open space and recreation opportunities for many people. Our state parks host millions of people annually; most of them are state residents. Host municipalities and their citizens benefit from the convenience of having these facilities within their boundaries both in terms of proximity to recreational opportunities, increased property values and the direct economic benefit of the dollars spent in local businesses by park visitors. In turn, municipal services are sometimes utilized by state park visitors. On balance the relationship between Connecticut's state parks and their municipal hosts is a positive one. For those who need emergency services many park visitors have insurance. If the General Assembly supports providing resources to local ambulance providers we would be glad to work with the Committee and other interested parties to craft a solution.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposed bill.

If you should require any additional information from the Department of Environmental Protection regarding this bill, please contact the Department's legislative liaison, Robert LaFrance, at 424-3401.