

Representative Roy, Senator Meyer, Members of the Environment Committee, for the record my name is Angela Miller. I, and my extended family and many friends, are long standing and dedicated campers at Hammonasset State Park. I am here to voice objection to the proposed 21 day statute that you seek to impose to the detriment of long-term campers such as my family and friends, as well as to the detriment of State and local area revenues and jobs. My reference to "long-term" campers is intended to mean people who camp at Connecticut State Parks more than 21 days between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

As an initial matter, I admit to you that the many, many fond past and present experiences at Hammonasset are the impetus for my presenting this testimony today. Our family has camped at Hammonasset for 4 generations and great-grandparents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, sons, daughters and friends have all enjoyed and continue to enjoy Hammonasset State Park. In fact, one of our family members still comes to Hammonasset to camp each summer all the way from Virginia so that his children can enjoy the experience of time spent camping with his parents, brothers, sister, aunts, cousins, and nieces and nephews. As I could never do justice to the many memories of our time at Hammonasset, I will not try to recount here all the first steps taken at the campsite by children, first times on a bike without training wheels, nights by the campfire, fishing and crabbing excursions, swimming after a storm in what we call the "big waves", bingo and movies at the old pavilion, volley ball at Dowds, climbing the rock jetty at Meigs, and the many, many other memories and events that are part of the experience of long-term camping at Hammonasset. Instead, I will simply note that, as a personal matter, the proposed 21 day statute threatens to destroy the creation of new memories for my family as well as the many other long-term Hammonasset campers. Now, I will provide you the additional reasons why the proposed 21 day statute should not be approved.

First, the proposed 21 day statute requires that long-term campers accept the cost of maintaining their trailer, and the towing and attendant costs for a full year, but will limit the benefit of such expense to 21 days. I know that a number of long-term campers, particularly those from out of State, will no longer consider such expense to be worth 21 days of use. Regardless, at the very least, the proposed regulation will reduce the income derived by the State from such long-term campers to a 21 day period. I would have assumed that the State would prefer to be passing a new statute that would cause an increase in State revenue, rather than the proposed 21 day statute that will increase the number of vacant camping lots and cause a reduction of both State revenue and the revenue for local area stores, service providers and restaurants.

Second, long-term campers consistently lease campsites regardless of weather, bugs or other external factors. Weekend only campers will provide an under-utilization of State Park resources, as well as a less consistent revenue stream. As such, the proposed 21 day statute will reduce both State revenue and the revenue for local area stores, service providers and restaurants.

Third, Hammonasset is not consistently sold out during the week. Long-term campers, however, pay to lease camp sites on the weekday dates, as well as the weekend dates. The reduction of long-term campers will increase the number of camping sites vacant during the week. Again, the proposed rule will reduce State revenue and revenue for local area stores, service providers and restaurants.

Fourth, with reduced revenue, and multiple campsites remaining unleased, Hammonasset presumably will be

required to reduce its full and/or part time summer staff, which again is not a benefit to the State or the local area stores, service providers and restaurants.

Fifth, the enforcement of the proposed 21 day statute possibly discriminates against families. The draft language notes that you plan to enforce the proposed 21 day statute against families. I question however why there has been a decision to focus solely against the use of State Parks by families. My brief research indicates that church, youth, charity, and Special Olympics events take advantage of the natural resources available at Connecticut State parks. I presume that all supporters of such groups and/or the related compelling events will be subject to the 21 day camping restrictions that you now seek to impose per the proposed 21 day statute. Or, will the enforcement of the proposed 21 day statute not apply to such groups/events and therefore be unfairly applied solely to families? If so, why would this Committee decide to single out the family unit for enforcement?

Sixth, Commissioner Esty has noted that the new combined Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection is "committed to motivating Connecticut's residents - especially children - to learn and care about the environment." How is such a stated commitment consistent with the proposed 21 day statute that will reduce the number of campsites leased at Hammonasset and thereby reduce the amount of time that children spend at one of the best places to learn and appreciate Connecticut's environment -- Hammonasset.

Finally, I will end with the simple statement that I fail to see any positive reason why the proposed 21 day statute should be passed. Nor do I understand what group of Connecticut citizens seek to benefit from the proposed regulation as there is no apparent benefit that will result, yet the harm to long-term campers and the damage to State and local area revenues, jobs, and families is apparent.

Thank you.

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