Senator Fonfara, Representative Rojas and distinguished members of the Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee, thank you for taking the time to review my thoughts.

My name is Lelah Campo. I am writing to you as the owner of Cozy Hills Campground a privately-owned campground located in Litchfield/Bantam, CT. We recognize the serious challenges caused by the ongoing state budget crisis. We respect the work and difficult choices you will have to make to resolve this problem.

However, we hope you will consider, as you have in the past, **NOT repealing the sales tax exemption** for campsites as has been proposed in the Governor’s Budget and HB 7410.

Adding this new tax would give other states without a tax or less tax, a distinct competitive advantage over the 48 private campgrounds in Connecticut. It is also unclear as to whether this tax will apply to state campgrounds as well...another possible competitive disadvantage. Most of these campgrounds are small, family owned businesses which contribute significantly to their communities both financially and as good citizens.

It also raises the question as to how this will impact publicly owned campgrounds, and whether they will charge the tax as well? These grounds already leave us competing for business against properties that are greatly subsidized by tax dollars and leave us at a distinct competitive disadvantage.

In addition, we take reservations a year in advance. A removal of the exemption could cause us to have to go back and add the sales tax after the payment has been made. This will clearly create a very concerning customer service interaction.

Removing this exemption could cause campers to “vote with their wheels” and simply go where there is no tax or less tax, causing an economic loss to the state of Connecticut.

The 48 campgrounds in Connecticut are a significant economic contributor with almost a quarter of a billion dollars ($210,700,000) of expenditures annually. Almost 1,000 direct jobs, with $36.1 million in annual direct wages are a result of these small businesses. (Sources: RV Industry Association, Connecticut Campground Owners Association, Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis). Clearly, we want this impact to grow and not do anything to cause these numbers to shrink. A tax will have a negative economic impact for Connecticut in the future.

We look forward to your support and thank you for all your hard work on behalf of the citizens and small businesses in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

*Lelah Campo*