

Information for Representative Brian Harrison

Ed Walker, Ed.D. – Executive Director at Mt. Lebanon Camp and Retreat in Cedar Hill. One of the largest church camps in Texas serving over 12,000 campers each summer and retreat groups throughout the year. Over 1 million safely since 1945. Currently serving as president of the Christian Camp and Conference Association (CCCA – said 3 C A) for Texas.

Items *in the House Bill* that passed into law and are being implemented by DSHS:

1. End-to-end fiber optic broadband requirement – A preliminary survey has indicated that 173 camps do not have access to fiber and thus would not receive a license to operate. (Sen. Perry and Bettencourt said in committee that “Every camp has fiber...”). Even if it can be provided at significant expense (one camp has stated the cost quoted at \$1.7 million), the timeline is too short.

Sec. 141.0092. REDUNDANT INTERNET CONNECTIONS REQUIRED.

(a) In this section, "broadband service" has the meaning assigned by Section 490I.0101, Government Code.

(b) A youth camp operator shall provide and maintain for a youth camp:

(1) Internet services through a broadband service that connects to the Internet using end-to-end fiber optic facilities; and

(2) a secondary Internet connection through a broadband service distinct from the service described under Subdivision (1).

Sec. 141.0094. DENIAL OR SUSPENSION OF LICENSE FOR NONCOMPLIANCE. (a) The department shall not issue a license or renew a license for a youth camp under this chapter if the youth camp operator is not in compliance with Sections 141.0091 and 141.0092 or a rule adopted under those sections.

(b) The department shall suspend a youth camp license issued by the department if the camp or youth camp operator is in violation of Section 141.0091 or 141.0092. The department may reinstate the license only on or after the date the department determines the camp and the operator are in compliance with Sections 141.0091 and 141.0092.

2. Government overreach in camp supersedes the freedom of camp, church, and parents supervising campers to assemble and enjoy the quiet use of their property.

Sec. 141.0093. REQUIRED NOTICE FOR MODIFICATION OF CERTAIN YOUTH CAMP STRUCTURES OR ACTIVITY LOCATIONS. (a) A youth camp operator shall notify the department, in the form and manner prescribed by the department, of any modification to:

(1) a structure intended to facilitate youth camp

activities; or

(2) the location of a camp activity on the camp's premises.

Items suggested in the House Bill that passed into law and with possible DSHS discretion:

3. Fee Structure – The entire financial burden of hiring new state inspectors for DSHS was placed on camps, most of which are non-profit entities.

The amounts are egregious, ours will go from \$450 to \$19,500 annually. The state didn't provide any funding to help implement the required changes. This alone could result in closures of existing camps and be a hurdle to new camps, including camps for special needs, autism, mobility camps, inner-city, foster care, and religious camps.

A for-profit camp may serve only a few hundred campers who stay throughout the summer and pay \$2,000/week, but will pay the lowest fees. A large non-profit may serve many more kids, but only charge, or raise, \$250 for a week of camp, but will pay the highest fees.

4. Camper to Counselor ratios were mandated to be reviewed by DSHS, but not changed. The longstanding rule has been a minimum of 1:10 (and most camps do already surpass this). The draft rules, however, have indicated a change mandated to take place by this summer. Again, there seems to be no consideration that our camps are already full, nor that church camps operate in a different manner with church volunteers. Many facilities are set for that 1:10 ratio (11 bunkbeds), so taking Jr. High students to 1:8 ratio unexpectedly decreases our camper capacity by 20% - from 20 per cabin to 16 per cabin and leaves beds empty. This should have AT LEAST been phased in, and input from impacted camps solicited.

Rule §265.32 - Minimum Overnight Camper to Counselor Ratios

The minimum camper to counselor ratios for overnight stays at youth camps are as follows.

(1) For campers from four to five years of age--one counselor for every five campers.

(2) For campers from six to eight years of age--one counselor for every six campers.

(3) For campers from nine to 14 years of age--one counselor for every eight campers.

(4) For campers from 15 to 17 years of age--one counselor for every 10 campers.