

Senator <XXX>,

I am writing on behalf of the Virginia Overnight Camp Coalition, representing a sector of Virginia's economy that has been uniquely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. We are united in asking for your support for Item 112 #1s, the budget amendment sponsored by Senator Creigh Deeds and Jill Vogel to help stabilize our industry until we are able to recover from the losses sustained this past year. Overnight summer camps were the only small business sector not permitted to operate in any phase of Virginia's plan for reopening. As one of only six states that prohibited overnight camps from opening this past summer, we suspended operations in support of Governor Northam's restrictions to slow the spread of Covid-19. Now, we need your support!

Overnight camps play a vital role in Virginia's economy and in the well-being and development of our youth. Nationally, summer camps are a multi-billion dollar a year industry, employing both year-round and seasonal staff, purchasing local goods and services, and contributing to regional tourism. Our sector also provides needed childcare services to working parents. The CDC has named a growing mental health crisis for children as a result of the pandemic. The camp experience is an important piece of the solution to this mental health crisis, and is critical to the growth and education of children across the Commonwealth. It has been proven that a camp experience helps a child develop confidence, resilience, perseverance, independence, and important connections with nature, peers, and adults.

Camps across Virginia serve many demographics: economically disadvantaged families, those with increased medical needs, those with disabilities, Black, white, Hispanic, urban, and rural. Our camps include non-profit, private, agency affiliated, independent, and religious organizations.

While I support the entire overnight camping sector, I'm really writing on behalf of my camp, Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center. Located in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley, our campus is as beautiful as our ministry is vibrant. Massanetta has pitched in by offering shelter to refugees, and providing a place for day care (called EduCamp) as parents needed a place to send children for virtual schooling while they worked. We have developed online programming to assist congregations from Virginia to Nevada as they learned how to meet virtually. We continue to innovate, not only to survive, but to thrive. In pre-COVID times, thousands of people of all ages experience our life-shaping program. In 2022, we will celebrate our centennial, and we are looking forward to navigating these times as we step into our second century. We know on the other side of this pandemic, we will play a key role in helping folks process the lasting implications of this crisis. Your support of Item 112 #1s, will help us help Virginians, and help stabilize a critical sector of our economy.

As a seasonal Industry not permitted to operate in any phase of the pandemic, the amount of relief funds Virginia's overnight camps qualified for was proportionally less than other businesses who were permitted to operate. Much uncertainty remains regarding summer 2021, with phase 3 restrictions not yet modified and new proposals for year-round school. However, our industry must start making preparations and financial investments now if we are to be viable this summer. Without dedicated financial support specific to our circumstances, we are struggling to continue our mission to serve youth across the Commonwealth at a critical time when they have already lost so much.

I greatly appreciate your time and attention to this matter. Item 112 #1s will help thousands of children throughout Virginia, young people who rely on camps for summer employment, parents in need of summertime childcare options, and rural communities that rely on camps to boost local economies. I respectfully request that you give this amendment consideration and add funding to save camps for our kids.

Sincerely,
Name, Title
Camp Name
Address

[View all members of the Coalition of Virginia's Overnight Summer Camps.](#)