



May 22, 2020

Dear Commissioner Bharel:

Our organizations represent the summer camp industry, making up over 1,400 summer camp programs (Summer Camps) across Massachusetts. Collectively, our programs serve thousands of youth and drive millions of dollars of spending in the Commonwealth every summer. With schools canceled and childcare facilities shut down until June 29th, Summer Camps are in the unique position of mitigating COVID related learning gaps and providing childcare so that businesses can begin reopening. To enable those benefits, the industry has prioritized health and safety by partnering with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and other experts to develop critical safety guidance for day and overnight camps.

Collectively, we appreciate that the Baker Administration has stated that Day Camps are allowed to open in Phase 2 and that Residential Camp is allowed to open in Phase 3, pending public health data. **We understand that this is a fluid and difficult position for the Administration, but unfortunately the lack of guidance from the Commonwealth at this time has resulted in hundreds of camps making the decision to close for this summer. In the last 24 hours alone, Massachusetts will have lost the ability to serve approximately 10,000 children and we expect that trend to continue without more clarity soon.**

The delay in guidance, specifically the inability to indicate the size of a cohort, has severely limited Day and Residential camps ability to prepare, plan, and recruit staff and campers. The vast majority of Residential camps have already made the decision, and announcement, to close. Many Day camps are delaying their decision until the very last feasible moment. It takes camps several weeks to prepare; that preparation has been made more complex by the necessity to acquire PPE and make other health and safety decisions. Therefore, camps need at least 5 weeks of notice. Assuming a July 1st opening date, which would safely put Day Camp in Phase 2, the Commonwealth would need to release guidance early next week.

We respectfully urge the Baker Administration to issue guidance no later than Tuesday, May 26th that would align Day and Residential camp cohort sizes with the Phase 2 Youth Sports cohort of 25 individuals. We respect and agree with the emphasis of prioritizing health and safety measures. In recognition of that, we're willing to accept that Phase 2 may not open before July 1. We are prepared to operate with a July 1st start date. However, we CANNOT operate without clear cohort and camp capacity guidance.

An infection is only one of the risks that children face in this crisis, and camps will do all that can be done to mitigate those risks in accordance with DPH guidance. We should also be worried about the isolation and anxiety that so many kids and teens are facing right now. They desperately need the emotional connections, the summer learning community, the positive youth development that camp and other out-of-school programs



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provide. Please provide camps with the guidance that they need so that they can provide these critical experiences for children, before it is too late.

Every day that guidance is delayed, the universe of reliable childcare alternatives and safe summer camp shrink significantly. Summer camp is clearly a critical puzzle piece to the Commonwealth’s reopening strategy. Without practical guidance issued as soon as possible, there will not be a summer camp industry large enough to support that important role.

Thank you for your time and attention to saving the summer camp industry.

Respectfully,



CC:
Lt. Governor Karyn Polito
Secretary Marylou Sudders
Secretary Mike Kennealy
Assistant Secretary Dan Tsai