



From: Senator Kathy Bernier
To: Senate Committee on Insurance, Licensing and Forestry
Re: Testimony on Senate Bill 171
Relating to: Inspections of recreational and educational camps
Date: March 17, 2021

Thank you Chairwoman Felzkowski for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 171. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with Representative James on this legislation supporting Wisconsin recreational and educational camps. I want to note that last session this bill was unanimously passed by the full Assembly and by the Senate Committee on Public Benefits, Licensing, and State-Federal regulations. Unfortunately, the bill did not have time to make it to the Senate floor.

Overnight camps throughout Wisconsin let young people experience the great outdoors while teaching important life skills and creating lifelong friendships. In addition camps bring in millions of dollars in rural tourism revenue and employ hundreds of people.

These camps are subject to annual inspections by the American Camp Association (ACA). In addition, the camps also have to obtain licensing through the state in order to be fully accredited for operation. The requirements placed by the ACA are as strict as or stricter than the state's requirements leading to camps having to go through a repetitive process of obtaining both the ACA and state's approval.

Senate Bill 171 would help camps avoid duplicative processes by giving DATCP the ability to waive licensing inspections for two out of three years if camps have been accredited by the ACA. This would ease the administrative work for camps and for state inspectors, providing a simpler renewal process for camps across the state.

I ask that you please vote for Senate Bill 171 to ease the administrative burden on these camps and ensure that these Wisconsin institutions can continue to provide exceptional experiences and skills to children well into the future.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

JESSE JAMES

Testimony before Senate Committee on Insurance, Licensing and Forestry
Senate Bill 171
Wednesday, March 17, 2021

Thank you Chairwoman Felzkowski and committee members for hearing Senate Bill 171 today. Senate Bill 171 is part of a package of bills reforming licensure and requirements for overnight camps. These camps are currently regulated as restaurants, educational centers, clinics and child care centers, adding layers of redundant and duplicative regulations they must meet. This package seeks to address this over-regulation and modernize the state's approach, ensuring their continued success.

SB 171, would allow the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection or a local health department, when issuing a renewal license to a camp, to waive any applicable inspection requirement for two out of every three license years if the camp has already been accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA). ACA requirements are national standards the camps must uphold. In many cases, the camp inspections, by the ACA and by the state, are duplicative and burdensome.

The intent of this bill is to lower the burden on camps of paying for a costly inspection year after year while still maintaining the high quality of the camp. When a camp must undergo a costly inspection, that cost is then put on to the parents who send their children to camp. It can make camps unaffordable for parents because of unnecessary regulations. This bill will not lower standards for the health or well-being of a camp, but will keep the access of the camp open to people of all socio-economic backgrounds. The ACA provides rigorous, uniform safety and quality standards, and this bill will ease the administrative burden on camp owners as well as at the state.

I would like to thank my co-author, Senator Bernier, for her partnership on this and thank you for your time.