



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT of NATURAL and CULTURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION of PARKS and RECREATION
172 Pembroke Road Concord, New Hampshire 03301
Phone: (603) 271-3556 Fax: (603) 271-3553
Web: www.nhstateparks.org

May 1, 2019

The Honorable Melanie Levesque
and the Election Law & Municipal Affairs Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 102
Concord, NH 03301

RE: HB 641 allowing municipalities to collect an occupancy fee from operators of local room rentals.

Dear Chairman Levesque and Members of the Committee,

Please accept this testimony on behalf of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation ("Division") regarding HB 641. **The Division does not take a position on this legislation, but we are concerned about the financial impact of this bill and request clarification on the bill's intent.**

The Division operates 23 campgrounds with 1,400 campsites and RV sites, and 35 cabins and yurts. The bill refers to "occupancy, as defined in the meals and rooms statute RSA 78-A:3, VI, as the use of a "room in a hotel." Should this bill become law and a municipality votes to collect an occupancy fee, we understand that the Division would pay such fees on its cabins and yurts as is currently done under the Rooms and Meals Tax, but not on campsites and RV sites.

The fiscal impact to the Division would be up to \$12,880, if all municipalities where the 35 cabins and yurts are located elected to collect the \$2/night fee and if all cabins and yurts were fully occupied during the operating season of May 1 to Oct 31 (a total of 184 nights).

The Division currently operates 1,400 campsites and RV sites, and 84 of those sites have a nightly fee of over \$40. If this bill should apply to these campsites and RV sites, the fiscal impact to the Division would be up to an additional \$30,912 per season. The total fiscal impact to the Division for cabins, yurts, certain campsites and RV sites would be up to \$43,792 per operating season.

The State Park System in New Hampshire is operationally self-funded, one of the only such systems in the country. Whether the occupancy fee is passed on directly to the visitor or becomes a direct cost to the Division, it has an impact on the financial resources available to operate the state park system. Of 93 the state parks, fees are collected at approximately half; and, of those that do generate revenue, less than half of these generate positive revenue to support the rest of the state parks system. State campground revenue is key to the support of the entire park system.

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Chair Melanie Levesque, Senate Election Law & Municipal Affairs Committee

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We respectfully request clarification as to whether this legislation will apply an occupancy fee on campsites and RV sites under any circumstances. Also, pursuant to RSA 216-A:3-g, state park fees need to be approved by the Fiscal Committee. We seek clarification on whether this bill enables the Division to increase its fees to collect the occupancy fee without Fiscal Committee approval.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 641. Please let me know if I can answer questions or provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip A. Bryce". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Philip A. Bryce, Director

Cc: Sarah L. Stewart, Commissioner

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