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February 11, 2021

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

RE: New York State allowing the opening of overnight summer camps

Dear Governor Cuomo:

I write respectfully requesting that overnight camps be allowed to open so thousands of children may receive much-needed opportunities to safely enjoy New York's great outdoors, spend quality time with their peers, make new friends, and create lifelong memories.

The past year of the COVID-19 pandemic has been especially challenging for children and families across New York State. From social distancing to mask-wearing, remote/hybrid academic learning, the cancellation or suspension of sports, clubs, and other beloved extracurricular activities, the children of New York State have experienced unprecedented changes and challenges to their everyday lives. New York's children have continually shown incredible resiliency and courage in the face of these disruptions.

Last year, out of an abundance of caution for the health and safety of children and camp staff, New York State suspended the operation of overnight summer camps. Now, as we will soon mark one year since the COVID-19 pandemic's onset, we thankfully have multiple vaccines that are proven safe and efficacious in preventing severe COVID-related illness, hospitalization, and death. We also know much more about the virus, how it spreads, and that effective risk mitigation efforts such as proper social distancing, thorough sanitization, and the wearing of masks can help prevent and reduce the spread of COVID-19.

On Tuesday, February 2, 2021, the New York State Camp Safety Advisory Council, comprised of representatives from the New York State Department of Health, the medical community, camp owners, and directors held a public meeting on the resumption of summer camps. The resolution of their meeting was the passage of a resolution affirming that overnight and day camps can operate safely this summer. The Council unanimously voted to both recommend to New York State that overnight camps should be allowed to operate and that there should be no limitations on group size on overnight and day camps. The Council's detailed report advocating for the resumption of summer camps is currently being circulated within the State Department of Health.

Without question, sleepaway camps serve an invaluable role in children's positive social-emotional development. Camp is perhaps the safest and best place for young people to be, both from an emotional and physical health perspective, given all they have been subjected to because of COVID-19.

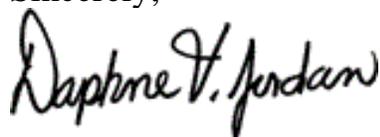
Serious economic consequences are expected if overnight summer camps in New York State are not allowed to return to full operational status this summer. In fact, it is anticipated that many New York State sleepaway camps may permanently go out of business due to ongoing financial hardships, meaning more lost jobs and opportunities for our state.

Governor, sleepaway camps in Maine and New Hampshire safely operated in 2020. Furthermore, on June 26, 2020, your administration announced that day camps statewide were allowed to resume operations effective June 29, 2020, and they did so, successfully. New York State's overnight summer camps should be afforded the same opportunity for the benefit of countless children who missed out on this experience last year due to the pandemic.

New York State providing advance notice that overnight summer camps can resume their operations will assist them in successfully implementing all necessary COVID-19 safety protocols including testing, capital projects, supply ordering, and hiring staff. Overnight summer camps are ready, willing, and able to meet and exceed all health and safety protocols to provide a positive experience for guests. They must be allowed to do so.

Thank you for your consideration of my request made on behalf of overnight summer camps across New York State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daphne V. Jordan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "D".

Daphne Jordan
State Senator, 43rd District