



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT of NATURAL and CULTURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION of PARKS and RECREATION
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April 10, 2024

The Honorable Andrew Renzullo
and the Resources, Recreation and Development Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 305-307
Concord, NH 03301

RE: SB 387-FN state parks pass pilot program for recovery centers and community mental health centers.

Dear Chair Renzullo 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 SB 387-FN state parks pass pilot program for recovery centers and community mental health centers. NH State Parks recognizes the health benefits that outdoor recreation and parks can provide to those in recovery. I appreciate Senator Watters reaching out to me to craft a bill that would support the bill’s intent within the parameters of the self-funding model for the state park system.

By way of background, the State Park Fund was established in 1991, creating an operationally self-funded parks system. The House Appropriations Committee report that recommended passage wrote: *“This bill establishes the New Hampshire state park and ski areas as an enterprise-type self-funded, accountable business entity to provide improved park and ski recreation facilities and services to New Hampshire citizens and tourists alike.”*

The fee approval process through the Joint Legislative Fiscal Committee pursuant to RSA 216-A:3-g, was established *“...to provide the department with the ability to maximize revenues and to adjust fees according to market conditions and trends as is the common practice in private industry.”* The Division has been working on a calibration of fee schedules across the Parks system in consultation with the Fiscal Committee dating back to 2018. We thank the Fiscal Committee for its support in this effort.

We recognize that state parks can provide mental health benefits to those in recovery by providing recreational opportunities in an outdoor environment. Similar to the existing NH Library Pass program, we would provide state park passes to recovery and community mental health centers registered with the Department of Health and Human Services. The recovery and mental health center would issue a day-use pass to its client for admission to a state park.

NH State Parks is willing to provide the pass at no cost to the recovery and community health centers during the 3-year pilot program period. Should this program continue, we would likely establish a reasonable fee for the annual passes. For example, NH libraries purchase state park passes at an annual cost of \$105 per pass. The pass is “checked out” by the library patron for access to day-use areas within the state park system for two adults and up to four children.

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Chair Renzullo and the Resources, Recreation and Development Committee

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and additional information on SB 387.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BJW', followed by a horizontal flourish.

Brian J. Wilson

Director

C: Sarah L. Stewart, Commissioner, Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

BJW/ttl-040124