



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT of NATURAL and CULTURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION of PARKS and RECREATION
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January 16, 2024

The Honorable Kevin Avard
and the Energy and Natural Resources Committee
State House, Room 103
Concord, NH 03301

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

Dear Chair Avard 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 health centers. NH State Parks recognizes the health benefits that outdoor recreation and parks can provide to those in recovery. And, 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 opportunity to collect revenue at some parks to support the rest of the park system is also at the foundation of our self-funded parks system. RSA 216-A:3-g states that: *"Fees for the use of park areas shall be designed to recover a reasonable portion of budget expenses consistent with the purposes of RSA 216-A:1 and 216-A:3. The general court does not intend that all park facilities be self-supporting."* Of the 93 state park properties, the Division collects a day-use admission fee at only 21 state parks, resulting in 77% of park properties having no day-use admission. Of the 21 parks that collect fees, 14 state parks provide surplus revenue to support the rest of the state parks system.

We do recognize that state parks can provide 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 health centers registered with the Department of Health and Human Services. The recovery and health center would issue a day-use pass to its client for admission to a state park.

January 16, 2024

Chair Avar and the Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Page 2

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.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian J. Wilson", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Brian J. Wilson
Director

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

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