



September 6, 2017

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

**We are writing on behalf of more than 300 Jewish summer camps serving more than 200,000 children, teens, and young adults to urge you to preserve the U.S. State Department's J-1 Camp Counselor program and the use of the Summer Work Travel (SWT) program by America's summer camps.**

We understand that as your Administration defines the scope of the "Buy American Hire American" executive order, you may be considering recommendations which would radically reduce or eliminate the Camp Counselor and SWT camp cultural exchange programs. **This would have a drastic impact – both educationally and operationally – on the many programs we support.**

**Participation of Jewish counselors and staff from Israel and other countries through the J-1 Camp Counselor and SWT programs is critical to the mission of the Jewish camp field – and the American camp experience as a whole.** Our camps utilize these programs to bring cultural exchange staff from Israel to summer programs, where they participate in daily camp life, sharing Jewish traditions, teaching about Jewish and Israeli culture, and serving as role models for Jewish campers. American staff – which comprise more than 90 percent of camp teams – work hand in hand with international staff, providing a fully-integrated cultural experience. **If these summer staff are no longer able to participate in this cultural exchange, the very nature and existence of these essential programs would be under grave threat.**

Our research has proved that Jewish summer camp experiences are a significant predictor of Jewish identity formation and whether children will continue to be part of their faith communities as they grow. In addition, summer camps provide critical experiential and developmental opportunities for America's youth. **Any threat to these programs and their educational impact could cause ripples across our entire faith community and deeply impact the development of future Jewish faith leaders and their connection to Israel.**

As well, please consider the following operational issues that would impact camps:

- Reduction in these programs will result in the loss of thousands of *American* jobs as camps might be forced to downsize or even close;
- Reduction in camp operations and services – an \$18 billion industry nationwide – would have tremendously negative impacts on many local economies, particularly in rural areas;
- There are not enough American students and workers to fill jobs in American summer camps, especially those located in rural areas; and
- J-1 Camp Counselors and SWT camp participants are key to our cultural exchange efforts, and to American’s diplomatic outreach with the rest of the world.

We cannot understate the significance of the J-1 Visa Camp Counselor and SWT programs to all of our nation’s summer camps, and in particular to our many Jewish camps. We urge you to preserve these vital programs.

Very truly yours,



Jeremy J. Fingerman, Chief Executive Officer  
Foundation for Jewish Camp



Peter J. Weidhorn, Board Chair  
Foundation for Jewish Camp

**Co-Signatories:**

Doron Krakow, President and CEO  
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