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**Jewish Camp Movements Urge Trump Administration to Continue  
Cultural Exchange Visa Program**

*With threat to program looming, organizations representing hundreds of Jewish  
summer camps affirm the importance of international counselors*

**NEW YORK** - The Foundation for Jewish Camp, with the support of major Jewish camp movements, this week sent [a letter to President Trump](#) asking him to preserve and maintain the U.S. State Department's J-1 Visa Camp Counselor program and the use of the Summer Work Travel program by America's summer camps. Trump issued an [executive order](#) earlier this spring which could reduce or eliminate these important cultural exchange programs.

Federal agencies are expected to report back to the president on possible scope and implementation this month.

In the letter, Jeremy J. Fingerman, CEO of Foundation for Jewish Camp, and Peter J. Weidhorn, board chair of Foundation for Jewish Camp, explain that reduction in these vital programs will result in the loss of thousands of American jobs as camps may be forced to downsize or close, in addition to the loss of key cultural experiences and exchange efforts intrinsic to the summer camp experience. The letter is part of [Foundation for Jewish Camp's larger work in support of the preservation of the J-1 Visa program](#).

[The letter](#), spearheaded by Foundation for Jewish Camp, is co-signed by the leadership of JCC Association of North America, the Union for Reform Judaism, National Ramah Commission, Habonim Dror North America, Association of Independent Jewish Camps, and Young Judea Global. In the letter, the organizations state, in part:

“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. ...

“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.”

The full text of the letter can be found on the [Foundation for Jewish Camp’s website](#).

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### **About Foundation for Jewish Camp**

The Foundation for Jewish Camp is a charitable organization that helps create transformative summer experiences for young people—ensuring the Jewish future. Founded in 1998, we are a catalyst for change throughout the field. We train and inspire camp leaders. We expand access to Jewish summers—and increase demand. We enhance the Jewish impact of those summers. And we develop programs to strengthen camps and summer experiences across the Jewish spectrum in North America—including One Happy Camper®, which has enabled tens of thousands of young people to experience Jewish summers. Further, we elevate Jewish camp on the cultural and philanthropic agenda. The Foundation for Jewish Camp has grown to work with over 300 day and overnight camps. Each summer we serve more than 200,000 youth, teens and college-aged counselors across North America. Please visit [jewishcamp.org](http://jewishcamp.org) and follow on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).