

2019 Memorandum in Support

Bill: A6024 by Assembly Member Barrett

Title: Establishes an outdoor Rx program to benefit residents of the state, particularly veterans and individuals recovering from substance abuse or a physical or mental trauma by establishing outdoor environmental, ecological, agricultural, or other natural resource-based therapy programs.

The Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) Supports this Legislation.

This legislation would amend the parks, recreation and historic preservation law, in relation to establishing an outdoor Rx program for outdoor environmental, ecological, agricultural, or other natural resource-based therapy programs; and to amend the state finance law, in relation to establishing the outdoor Rx program fund.

Recent studies¹ have proven what ADK (Adirondack Mountain Club) has known since our founding in 1922: nature heals both the body and the soul.² The stats show how debilitating isolation from the natural world can be for individuals and the society as a whole: ninety percent of the average American life is spent indoors, \$117 Billion is spent annually on healthcare costs linked to inactivity, U.S. obesity rates have tripled since the 1970s, 7.3% of Americans are depressed with depression among teens nearly twice that percentage, children need to have quality outdoor experiences by the age of 12 in order to develop an appreciation for nature and conservation as an adult.³

Studies have shown that time outdoors can be a valuable therapy to supplement traditional and other alternative (e.g., yoga and meditation)⁴ health care treatments, while also reducing reliance on prescription medication.⁵ The therapeutic benefits of time spent outdoors is clinically proven and is known to help reduce stress, improve concentration, and promote overall well-being, both physical and mental.⁶ Some of the benefits include boosting the immune system, reducing stress, lowering blood pressure, improving mood, improving focus, improving attention and impulse control in individuals with attention deficit issues, and increasing the rate of healing after trauma or surgery.⁷

The Outdoor Rx Program proposed in this legislation will promote the partnership and commitment of private organizations, including retail companies and outfitters, and will use the vast natural resources and park settings of the state of New York as the setting for the programs.

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¹ <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/14/8/851/htm>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/16/well/writing-prescriptions-to-play-outdoors.html>

³ <https://www.outdoorrx.org/#states>

⁴ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324815833_Nature_Mind_and_Medicine_A_Model_for_Mind-Body_Healing

⁵ <https://www.childrenandnature.org/learn/research/>

⁶ <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/90720.html>

⁷ <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/90720.html>