



# Maine County Commissioners Association

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## *LD 601, An Act to Reduce the Shortage of Municipal Emergency Medical Services Personnel by Removing Certain Vaccination Requirements*

April 24, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing on Health and Human Services, my name is Stephen Gorden and in addition to serving as a member of the board of commissioners for Cumberland County, I am writing today in my role as chair of the legislative policy committee of the Maine County Commissioners Association. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to the Committee in opposition to LD 601.

**About MCCA.** Briefly, the Maine County Commissioners Association was established in 1890 to assist Maine's county government in providing vital services to Maine citizens in a responsive, efficient, and credible manner. The Association is based in Augusta, represents all of Maine's 16 counties, and is governed by a board with representation from each participating county.

**Discussion.** Under LD 601, emergency medical services (EMS) personnel would be permitted to provide treatment within the scope of their licenses without having been vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus or the influenza virus. This would change current policy requiring EMS personnel to be vaccinated against both diseases.

To be clear, MCCA prioritizes the health and safety of the employees and staff of county government as well as the health and welfare of its citizens. With this in mind, the issue of mandatory vaccinations for EMS personnel presents a difficult policy issue for us.

As has been well-reported, there is a shortage of municipal EMS personnel, especially in rural counties across Maine. To the extent that this shortage may be impacted by some individuals who do not wish to be vaccinated, we understand and appreciate the hardships created on those citizens in need of EMS services. We further assume that LD 601 is intended to address this shortfall by removing the vaccination requirement.

At the same time, we believe that the patients and overall public health are benefitted when EMS personnel are vaccinated, and for us, this policy goal is more important. For this reason, we cannot support LD 601.

Leaving aside the question of vaccination, we believe the most significant part of the EMS personnel shortage is a lack of funding. Our Association testified in support of LD 526, *An Act to Provide Funding to Emergency Medical Services Organizations*, which would provide a one-time General Fund appropriation of \$25 million in fiscal year 2023-24 to the Maine Department of Public Safety targeting such organizations. We also support other efforts to provide more funding for EMS services in Maine. We believe this direction is where our efforts and those of the Legislature should focus if our goal is to bolster staffing within the EMS system of this State.

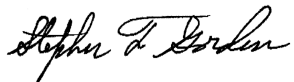
**Conclusion.** We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill, and if you have questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to let us know.

**Comments of MCCA re LD 601**

**April 24, 2023**

**Page 2**

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Gorden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial 'S'.

Stephen Gorden

Chair, Legislative Policy Committee

cc: Commissioner Richard Dutremble, President, MCCA  
James I. Cohen, Verrill Dana, LLP, MCCA Legislative Counsel