

## Testimony in Support of LD601 – James Seymour, Corinth, Maine

Members of the Committee:

I write to you today in support of LD 601. Since the start of the Covid-19 Pandemic, countless others and I have been on the front lines, responding to peoples' homes, and transporting patients in the small, contained compartment of an ambulance. At the very beginning, we did this with a lot of unknowns: Would there be PPE for me to wear? Is this person infected with the virus? Am I going to get sick? Am I going to make my family sick?

All of this changed on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021 when providers who, including myself, were fired for refusing the Covid Vaccine.

The Board pressed the mandate forward after board members acknowledged that there was already a shortage of staff, and the vaccine mandate exacerbated the issue. The board agreed in a unanimous decision that this was an issue, and they needed to address it; yet nothing has been done.

The state of Maine EMS is broken due to lack of staffing. Some third-party research has said that up to 30% of the Maine EMS community left due to the vaccine mandate. EMS services have closed their doors, or severely limited services as a direct effect of the mandate. Fire and EMS agencies across the State are losing staffing due to attrition and are unable to fill these positions. Removing this mandate will allow the providers who were fired back to work, and will have a direct, and positive change for the citizens of Maine by allowing for higher staffing at EMS agencies, allowing for better rested, and clear minded providers. More staffing also allows for more ambulances on the streets, thus allowing for faster response times and quicker care for medical emergencies.

With evolving science, and new data that comes out every day, our society is in a place where we can lift our vaccine mandates. Due to this, and other reasons, the United States COVID-19 Public Health Emergency is set to expire on May 11, 2023. The University of Maine system has removed their vaccine mandate. The US Military has removed their vaccine mandate.

In closing, I ask that you think of your family: Are you comfortable with your mother, father or children waiting a prolonged period for medical attention in a life-threatening situation, all because ambulances cannot be staffed? I urge you to vote in favor of LD 601, and let qualified, competent, and experienced providers back to doing what they love: helping the citizens of Maine.

James Seymour  
Firefighter/Advanced-EMT