

Testimony in Opposition to Part TT of LD 210

Ambulance Tax

Good morning, Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. My name is Rick Petrie, I am from the Town of Minot, Paramedic who has worked for more than 40 years, was a member of the Blue Ribbon Commission, and currently the Chief Executive Officer for North East Mobile Health.

I am testifying today in opposition to section TT of LD 210. As written, this section leaves out so many details that, if enacted, it has the potential to force any non-municipal EMS service out of business. This bill will require approximately 50 ambulance services (out of about 200) to give a no-interest loan to the State of Maine and only receive about 25% of the principal back in payments spread out over time. These 50 services are made up of community-based non-profits, some of whom are volunteer agencies, hospital-based services, and a small number of for-profit services. They provide both 911 response and non-emergency transfers to the citizens of the state of Maine. This tax will be devastating to the healthcare system in Maine that is already in crisis.

The fact that, in addition to the tax, the State would then apparently keep the matching funds from the Federal Government is a slap in the face to the EMS agencies that struggle against overwhelming odds to provide a critical service to the citizens of Maine every day.

It is true that the Maine Ambulance Association submitted Legislation previously that would levy a tax on non-municipal services and give it to MaineCare to leverage a 200% match from the federal government. However, the MAA proposal would also use data from the municipal services related to their funding from their tax base and combine it with the tax from the non-municipal services to increase the match from the federal government and then return the tax plus the match to all EMS services in Maine through increased Maine Care reimbursements. The Governors budget proposal does not do that and would instead hurt small, rural services.

You are the Legislators for a group of people who are overworked, underpaid, and under-resourced, and adoption of this section of the budget will now also send the message that they are unappreciated. I urge you to either reject this section of the budget, or request that it be re-worked with input from the Maine Fire Chiefs and Maine Ambulance Association so that EMS agencies that serve you are strengthened, not penalized.

Thank you for your consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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