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Testimony of the Maine Ambulance Association Before the Maine Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee in Support of LD 583

An Act to Support Informed Community Self-Determination in Emergency Medical Services Planning

March 3, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and other Members of the Committee,

My name is Butch Russell, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Maine Ambulance Association. I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of LD 583, which will provide essential funding for Emergency Medical Services Community Grant Programs.

The most recent round of EMS-related grant applications closed on February 28, 2025, and the number of funding requests far exceeded the amount available. This overwhelming demand underscores the urgent need for additional resources to help communities assess and sustain their emergency medical services. Without increased funding, many towns that applied for assistance will be left without the support they need to stabilize or improve their EMS systems.

Maine's rural communities, in particular, have struggled to maintain reliable EMS coverage. Through the Informed Community Self-Determination process, several towns have been able to evaluate their EMS systems, engage the public in decision-making, and implement sustainable service models. However, these efforts have been funded primarily by individual towns or through private grants, such as those from the Maine Health Access Foundation (MeHAF). Without dedicated state support, many communities lack the financial resources to undertake these critical assessments and restructuring efforts.

The success of these ICSD-based programs has demonstrated clear benefits:

- Helping communities evaluate their EMS needs through structured assessments and public engagement
- Providing financial transparency, allowing towns to make informed funding decisions
- Developing sustainable service models, reducing the risk of EMS disruptions
- Improving recruitment and retention of EMS personnel through strategic workforce planning

Despite these successes, the need for funding remains greater than ever. The fact that the most recent grant round was oversubscribed makes it clear that demand far outpaces available

funding. LD 583 presents an opportunity to address this shortfall and provide Maine communities with the support they need to build strong, sustainable EMS systems. Without this funding, many towns will continue to struggle with EMS shortages, delayed response times, and financial instability.

I urge this committee to support LD 583 and provide the funding necessary to ensure every Maine community has access to reliable emergency medical services.

Sincerely,
Butch Russell
Executive Director, Maine Ambulance Association