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Dear Members of the Legislature,

My name is Sonja Philbrook and I have lived on Swan's Island since the age of 5, but my family roots can be traced back to the first white settlers on the island. For the last 27 years I have been affiliated with Swan's Island EMS in a few ways: as a volunteer EMT (Emergency Medical Technician), an assistant chief and a crew chief. While reading my testimony, please keep in mind that we are an EMT-level service. We do not have paramedic- or intermediate-level providers on Swan's Island. This means we are very limited in the medications and medical interventions that we can provide so readily available transportation to higher-level services on the mainland is imperative. Additionally, while most other ambulance services on the mainland are able to access mutual aid (assistance from EMS and fire departments in nearby towns), we are not able to due to the logistics and delayed response time transporting them to Swan's Island.

In my personal and professional experience, having the ferry overnight at Swan's Island so that it can make emergency runs is crucial to the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of the residents. More than once, I have been called to transport a person who is having a psychotic episode or dealing with dementia or Alzheimers. If the ferry had not been available for those trips we would have had to consider LifeFlight, Coast Guard or personal lobster boat, and those options can only be considered if the weather allows, and we all know what the weather in Maine can be like, particularly those who live on the coast. For a patient who is cognitively challenged, it can be a safety issue to put them in a helicopter or small Coast Guard boat without the calming effect of loved ones at their side. Additionally, personal lobster boats do not have the specialized insurance coverage should an injury occur during a medical transport. Utilizing LifeFlight, Coast Guard or a lobster boat also means that family members, in a time of crisis, may not be able to go with their loved one to the hospital due to capacity of the vessel or because they aren't able to take a vehicle to the mainland for personal transportation. It should also be noted that lobster boats (and possibly Coast Guard vessels) are not held to the same sterile environment requirements as are ambulances. All of these issues can be applied to a person with a traumatic injury, having a stroke or heart attack, or any of the countless reasons that people require emergency medical assistance. Time is of the essence and having the equipment, space, and stable work environment to provide patient care is best done while in an ambulance on the ferry.

I mentioned that overnighting the ferry on Swan's Island is crucial to mental and emotional wellbeing. If a patient needs to go to the hospital outside of the regular ferry schedule, and family members are not able to go with them, this will result in them waiting to call 911 until just before the first ferry so that family can take their own vehicle and meet the patient at the hospital. The extended wait time for calling 911 and the increased stress of knowing they have several hours before the first ferry is scheduled to run, causes a delay in treatment, increased blood pressure, exacerbation of physical symptoms, stress (which can negatively impact the body in a number of ways), not to mention possibly death or permanent disability.

For the wellbeing and safety of the residents of Swan's Island, I strongly request that you support LD 1231.

With thanks for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sonja Philbrook". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Sonja" is written with a large, looped 'S' and the last name "Philbrook" is written with a large, looped 'P' and a trailing flourish.

Sonja Philbrook