

Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

Neither For Nor Against

LD 1676 - Resolve, to Study Ways to Improve Recruitment and Retention of Rural Emergency Medical Services Personnel Through Access to Health Insurance

April 30, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am submitting testimony neither for nor against LD 1676, at the direction of MMA's Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). Our LPC is made up of individuals from across Maine with municipal officials elected by their peers across Maine's 35 Senate districts representing communities with very different access to available enforcement resources and local capacity.

Municipal officials appreciate the inclusion in the study as proposed, however, as the committee is also reviewing several other iterations of rebooting additional commissions to review EMS service in general, it may make more sense to incorporate the goals of this proposed study into the duties of a subcommittee with municipal representation of the current Board of EMS or under a reconstituted Blue Ribbon Commission.

As many rural communities cannot afford any full-time staff including in their town offices, health insurance is usually not offered for any per diem employees. However, at least one community, Patten, offers housing for their ambulance personnel so that per diem staff have a quality-of-life standard that is more attractive when they are on duty and stay close enough to respond immediately when called. The supporting communities are struggling to pay for the unreimbursed costs currently and care should be taken to improve the affordability of services in areas that are struggling currently to avoid adding potential unmet costs that cannot be shouldered by the community residents.

Officials hope that the resulting study we focus on where the state can assume some burdens that relieve the overreliance on the property tax to fund all aspects of ambulance services, and level the playing field between EMS services with full time capacity and those without.