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131st MAINE SENATE

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**Testimony of Senator Brad Farrin
In Support of L.D. 526, An Act to Provide Funding to
Emergency Medical Services Organizations
Before the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee
March 20, 2023**

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety: I am Brad Farrin and I have the honor of representing the people of Senate District 3, which includes towns in Kennebec, Somerset and Penobscot counties. I am before you today as a cosponsor to speak in support of L.D. 526, *An Act to Provide Funding to Emergency Medical Services Organizations*.

It is no secret that meeting healthcare needs in rural Maine, and across the country, has been a challenge. Throughout my eight years in the Legislature, I have worked to help pass legislation incentivizing people to work in rural areas; leveraged partnerships between Emergency Medical Service (EMS) providers and healthcare facilities; and provided funding for workforce development within the field. While these steps have alleviated the challenges to an extent, we still have a serious crisis on our hands – particularly as it relates to EMS.

According to a survey conducted by the American Ambulance Association, the turnover rate last year for full-time Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) was 36%. While not the greatest paying, the job requires many hours of training and can be stressful, often traumatic, and physically tasking at times. Rural communities without a healthcare facility nearby rely on EMTs. However, those are often the communities that struggle the most when it comes to receiving services.

This past fall, I served alongside 16 other individuals on the Blue Ribbon Commission to Study Emergency Medical Services in the State. The Commission was tasked with reviewing all aspects of EMS, including but not limited to compensation, costs, reimbursement rates, retention, training, workforce development, organization and local and state support. Following our six meetings, recommendations on the delivery and sustainability of services were compiled. While not surprising, one of the most significant findings was that EMS reimbursement is not keeping pace with the cost of providing services. As a result, EMS agencies, EMTs, and Maine citizens are directly impacted.

This bill is a result of Recommendation A-2 of the Commission's report, which called for the Legislature to allocate an initial \$25 million to "specifically target transporting EMS services at immediate risk of failing and leaving their service area without access to adequate EMS." I am in support of the amendment that Speaker Talbot Ross has proposed extending this funding to any

current Maine Licensed Transporting EMS service. I am well aware that paperwork can cut into valuable time for providing other services – this is true in every industry. However, I believe the requirement for Transporting EMS agencies, receiving part of this funding, to submit a statement each year documenting how the money was spent provides for a level of accountability and can help us to further review where and how we can better support these individuals and the critical work they provide.

Thank you for your time today. I hope you will join myself and others in supporting this critically important appropriation.