



TOWN OF CUMBERLAND, MAINE

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Good Morning, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Bill Shane, and I am the Town Manager of the Town of Cumberland, and I am here to testify in support of LD 601.

We have struggled as a Town to hire quality and qualified Paramedics since the onset of the pandemic in 2020. In November, we had to release one paramedic from patient care responsibilities because of the new laws. This November, the requirement for flu shots will cause us to lose one if not more paramedics. We have funding for 8 full-time paramedics. Until recently, we have been down 2 and in the last few years as many as 4 vacant positions. We have been supplementing our paramedics with EMTs who have limited ability to administer pain medications or even something as basic as an EPI pen.

Paramedics are our first line of defense for our citizens. They help triage and give patients a higher survival rate than EMTs as they are qualified to open the Cath Lab at Maine Medical with their prognosis and patient assessment. In Cumberland we have had several "saves" by the ability to get heart attacks victims immediately into the Cath Lab for life saving treatment. Having been in the Cath lab with 2 obstructions in major arteries, I can testify from experience how fortunate we are to have such skilled doctors in our state.

We recognize this is not any easy ask, and we also recognize that many Towns have accepted that this is the new way forward, but I don't believe putting skilled and talented paramedics out of work is in our citizen's best interest. The unvaccinated medics were all tested prior to working and shift, the protocol for my operations and most EMS services is to stay home if sick, so not to infect patients or team members. The success of flu vaccinations is somewhat questionable. I am fully vaccinated and often get the flu shots and end up with the flu anyway. I'm not arguing against the choice of taking a vaccine or flu shot, but to continue to allow the choice. At this point, if additional protocols such as testing prior to a shift is a way to mitigate this current shortage of medics, that truly is a win for all of us.

Thank you for your time and I appreciate your consideration.

William R. Shane, P.E.
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