

Testimony of William O'Neal

Director, Maine Bureau of Emergency Medical Services (Maine EMS)

Department of Public Safety

IN OPPOSITION of LD 245

“An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Blue-Ribbon Commission to Study Emergency Medical Services in the State”

Presented by Senator TALBOT ROSS of Cumberland.

BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Work Session: Monday, February 10, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and honorable members of the joint standing committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

My name is Wil O'Neal, and I am the Director of Maine Emergency Medical Services (Maine EMS)

I am testifying on behalf of the Maine Department of Public Safety and Maine EMS **IN OPPOSITION** of LD 245, “An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Blue-Ribbon Commission to Study Emergency Medical Services in the State”

Our office participated in the Blue-Ribbon commissions, and we generally support their final recommendations- but the formation of this Commission creates an additional layer of bureaucracy and becomes a barrier both through size and cost, to getting this important work done.

Viewed in tandem with the 2024 BRC report recommendation B-3 to “support the proposed reorganization of the EMS Board, which would establish a 9-member EMS Board charged with the strategic direction and oversight of the EMS system as well as a 9-member EMS Licensing Board, charged with the regulation of EMS licensing.” The inefficiency this commission adds becomes clear. With stakeholder discussions occurring at the EMS Board and EMS Office, which then may also end up before a commission, to still ultimately end up in front of this same committee, why not empower our agency to directly submit legislation by and through the EMS Board?

This bill proposes year-over-year costs that don't currently exist. It provides bloat, inefficiency, and redundant efforts that have the potential to obscure or complicate the work that is on-going to support EMS in Maine. This bill does not make the Maine EMS system more efficient or dynamic, and it doesn't help us provide higher quality care for our patients or improve conditions for our providers.

This bill creates a new commission under the auspice that there is a continued need for in depth discussion and exploration by a diverse group of stakeholders on the issues facing the future of the EMS system in Maine. This discussion already occurs within Maine EMS. In our current form there is robust support and participation from our stakeholders and system representatives on our EMS Board and its Committees. Additionally, we work alongside the Medical Direction and Practices Board and our State, Regional, and Associate Regional Medical Directors.

In Section 3, there is a change we have opposed in the past, and in another bill this session. This change to add the word "contractor" seems small but may have large and potentially catastrophic consequences for the quality of care and safety of our EMS patients and providers. We are working with our DHHS and Maine Ambulance Assoc. partners to address a solution to this in LD 238.

The Blue-Ribbon Commission to Study Emergency Medical Services in the State submitted its last report January 2024; this group included in its final report critical recommendations that have become the heart and framework of the Maine EMS 10-year Strategic Plan, and the basis of our current Maine EMS two-year action plan. In the twelve months since the Blue-Ribbon report, our office has achieved several of our most important priorities, and we have a clear path and plan for the work ahead.

Thank you, I am more than happy to answer any questions you may have.

Wil O'Neal