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Testimony of the Maine Ambulance Association Before the Maine Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee in Support of LD 245

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

February 10, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and other Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Maine Ambulance Association (MAA), I submit this testimony in support of LD 245, which takes critical steps toward addressing the sustainability and efficiency of emergency medical services (EMS) in Maine.

The recommendations in LD 245, based on the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission to Study Emergency Medical Services, are crucial to ensuring a sustainable and effective EMS system. However, the MAA recommends modifications to the bill, particularly regarding the size of the Maine Emergency Medical Services Commission, the handling of Section 3, the reassignment of responsibilities in Section 6, and the importance of long-term planning for EMS as an essential service in Section 2.

Sections 1, 4, and 5 – The Maine Emergency Medical Services Commission

LD 245 establishes the Maine Emergency Medical Services Commission as a permanent body to monitor, evaluate, and make recommendations on Maine's EMS system. This Commission would ensure that ongoing operational and financial challenges are addressed with data-driven solutions and stakeholder input.

MAA Supports the Commission But Recommends a Smaller and More Targeted Membership

The Maine Ambulance Association strongly supports the creation of this Commission but believes that the proposed 26-member structure is unnecessarily large. We recommend reducing it to 14 members with a balanced and representative composition to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

Recommended Commission Membership:

To ensure diverse perspectives while maintaining efficiency, we propose the following 14-member structure:

- 2 Representatives of the House (from Health Coverage, Insurance & Financial Services (HCIFS) and Health & Human Services (HHS) Committees)
- 2 Representatives of the Senate (from Criminal Justice and Public Safety (CJPS) and State & Local Government Committees)
- 1 Representative from the Statewide Association of Municipal Officials
- 1 Representative from the Statewide Association of Ambulance Services
- 1 Representative from the Statewide Association of Fire Chiefs
- 1 Representative from the Statewide Association of Hospitals
- 1 Representative from the County Commission
- 1 Representative from a Statewide or National Association of Emergency Physicians
- 1 Representative from a Statewide Association of Health Plans
- Maine EMS Board Chair or their appointee
- Maine EMS Director or their appointee: Non-Voting
- Director of MaineCare Services or their appointee: Non-Voting

This structure ensures that key stakeholders are represented while keeping the Commission small enough to be effective.

Role Clarification: Commission vs. EMS Board

It is also important to clarify the role of this new Commission in relation to the existing Maine EMS Board.

- The Maine EMS Board is responsible for governance, rulemaking, and operational oversight of EMS in Maine, including licensing, training, and compliance.
- The Maine Emergency Medical Services Commission should focus on system-wide operational and financial challenges, including:
 - Studying regional collaboration and efficiency models,
 - Understanding and addressing the true costs of running EMS services, and
 - Developing long-term sustainable funding solutions.

➔ Recommendation: Support Sections 1, 4, and 5 with an amendment reducing the Commission's size to 14 members with the above composition.

Section 2 – Municipal EMS Planning Requirement

Section 2 of LD 245 requires municipalities to adopt a plan for EMS service delivery and submit it to the Maine Emergency Medical Services Commission and the Office of Maine EMS.

The Maine Ambulance Association supports this provision as written because it ensures a structured approach to municipal EMS planning and encourages local governments to evaluate how EMS services are delivered within their communities.

Encouraging Regional Collaboration in EMS Planning

While municipalities should develop their own EMS plans, regional collaboration must be a priority to ensure efficiency, sustainability, and access to care. We recommend that the municipal EMS planning requirement be structured to encourage appropriate regional collaborations, with the state offering resources and guidance to facilitate these efforts.

- The Commission and Maine EMS should establish clear parameters and goals for regional EMS systems, ensuring that municipalities work together wherever feasible to reduce costs, improve response times, and enhance patient outcomes.
- Hospitals must be part of this discussion to coordinate care between pre-hospital EMS services and emergency departments, ensuring seamless transitions for patients.
- The hospitals also act as the Hubs in regional systems.
- State funding, technical assistance, and shared service models should be explored to help municipalities implement regional EMS solutions tailored to local needs.

Future Considerations: Mandating EMS as an Essential Service

While Section 2 is an important step, it does not mandate that municipalities provide or fund EMS services—a long-standing issue in Maine’s EMS system. Many communities remain vulnerable due to a lack of statutory obligation to ensure emergency medical response.

The Maine Ambulance Association supports stronger language in the future to recognize EMS as an essential service, similar to police and fire protection. This would provide greater stability and funding for EMS agencies statewide.

To further explore this idea, we recommend that the newly formed Maine Emergency Medical Services Commission be tasked with evaluating the feasibility and impact of mandating EMS as an essential service while incorporating regional collaboration strategies into any future mandate.

- ➔ Recommendation: Support Section 2 as written, but emphasize the need for regional collaboration, hospital involvement, and state-supported EMS system development. Additionally, task the Commission with evaluating the long-term need for stronger statutory requirements for EMS as an essential service.

Section 3 – Duplication with LD 238

Section 3 of LD 245 amends existing law to allow EMS providers to work within healthcare facilities. While MAA supports this concept, we note that it is already being addressed in LD 238 – An Act to Protect Emergency Medical Services Persons' Right to Work in Multiple Health

Care Settings, which is currently under review by the Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services (HCIFS) Committee.

➔ Recommendation: Remove Section 3 from LD 245 and defer this issue to LD 238.

Section 6 – EMS Funding Needs Analysis

Section 6 directs Maine EMS to conduct a funding needs analysis for communities looking to engage in regional EMS collaboration or regional service models.

MAA Supports the Analysis But Recognizes Maine EMS' Limited Capacity

We support the need for this analysis, as it is crucial in understanding the true costs and operational challenges of running an ambulance service in Maine. However, we also recognize and appreciate that Maine EMS currently lacks the staffing and resources to perform this analysis effectively.

➔ Recommendation: Amend Section 6 to assign the EMS funding analysis to the Maine Emergency Medical Services Commission instead of Maine EMS.

Section 8 – Public Awareness and Informational Campaign

Section 8 of LD 245 directs Maine EMS to develop and implement a public informational campaign to increase awareness of the essential role of EMS and the challenges facing ambulance services.

MAA Strongly Supports This Initiative

Raising public awareness about EMS challenges and building community support for necessary funding and reforms is critical to the sustainability of our services. Many citizens are unaware of:

- The financial instability of many EMS agencies,
- The staffing shortages that threaten emergency response times, and
- The need for new funding models to ensure adequate EMS coverage statewide.

A public awareness campaign would help educate residents and policymakers about these issues, encouraging stronger community engagement and support for EMS initiatives.

➔ Recommendation: Support Section 8, as public awareness is key to securing the future of EMS services in Maine.

Conclusion

The Maine Ambulance Association urges the Committee to:

1. Support LD 245 with an amendment to reduce the Maine Emergency Medical Services Commission from 26 members to 12 members or fewer.
2. Support Section 2 as written; but task the Commission with evaluating the feasibility of mandating EMS as an essential service in the future.
3. Remove Section 3 from LD 245 and allow LD 238 to serve as the legislative vehicle for this issue.
4. Amend Section 6 to assign the EMS funding analysis to the Maine Emergency Medical Services Commission instead of Maine EMS.
5. Support Section 8, recognizing that public awareness is critical to the future of EMS in Maine.

These changes will ensure that Maine's EMS system remains strong, sustainable, and well-coordinated—without unnecessary duplication or administrative inefficiencies.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.

Butch Russell
Executive Director
Maine Ambulance Association