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Testimony of the Maine Ambulance Association Before the Maine Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee in Support of LD 841

A Resolve to Study the Delivery of Emergency Medical Services to and
Ferry Service Effects on Island Communities in the State

April 2, 2025

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

My name is Butch Russell and I'm speaking today on behalf of the Maine Ambulance Association. We represent EMS agencies across the state, including those that serve Maine's island communities.

We're here in strong support of LD 841. This bill takes an important step toward addressing the serious challenges island communities face when trying to get emergency care to their residents.

We've heard from many island communities in recent years that it's becoming harder to safely and quickly transport patients to the mainland. Vinalhaven, for example, is fortunate to have regular ferry service—but when the ferry isn't running, they, like many smaller islands including Cranberry Isles, rely on local fishermen to get the job done. This kind of improvising speaks to the strength and resourcefulness of these communities, but it also shows how fragile and inconsistent the current system can be.

We need to find a better, more dependable way to provide emergency transport for island residents and visitors. This working group is a great first step in doing that.

We also respectfully ask that the Maine Ambulance Association be included as a member of the working group. As a statewide organization representing both island-based and mainland EMS providers, we feel we can bring valuable insight to the conversation.

Thank you for your time and for your focus on this important issue.

Sincerely,
Butch Russell
Executive Director, Maine Ambulance Association