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## Testimony in Support of LD 1605

An Act To License Ambulance Drivers Who Are Not Licensed To Provide Emergency Medical Services

Hearing Date: May 12, 2019 – 11:00 AM

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

My name is Jay Bradshaw. I live in Belgrade and serve as the Executive Director of the Maine Ambulance Association, a non-profit trade association committed to improving and supporting Maine's EMS system. Our members include emergency medical services of all sizes and corporate structures, and from every corner of the state.

We are pleased to share with you our support of this bill which will formally recognize personnel who are invaluable to many rural emergency medical services. The current EMS law and rules issues licenses and recognition for those who provide what we often think of as direct patient care; however, there is another group whose role is equally important, yet not currently included – those who safely operate ambulances to the scene of an emergency, and when transporting patients to and between hospitals.

Including ambulance drivers as licensed EMS personnel accomplishes several important objectives in recognizing their invaluable role and affording them the same benefits as other currently licensed EMS personnel.

Perhaps the most glaring recent example was last year when COVID vaccines were being rolled out to "essential front workers." That group included EMTs and Paramedics, but not ambulance drivers. This was due in part to the severe shortages of vaccines available and the absence of data to know how many ambulance drivers there were and with what services were they affiliated.

But it also goes beyond vaccines. Maine has had a Line Of Duty Death (LODD) death benefits law for two decades. This bill pays a lump sum death benefit of \$100,000 and provides for up to five years of post-secondary education at a Maine college or university to a decedent's spouse and dependents. This LODD benefit is extended to law enforcement, firefighters, corrections officers, EMTs and Paramedics, but is less than clear when it comes to ambulance operators. While some have indicated

that the LODD benefit was intended to include ambulance operators, they also acknowledge that the current language is less than clear.

LD 1605 removes that potential ambiguity and goes to the heart of the LODD law, which is that if an emergency responder dies while helping others, in addition to our ongoing gratitude, their family deserves the appropriate financial and educational provisions identified for this purpose.

Thankfully, we have not yet had to adjudicate differing interpretations of the LODD law regarding ambulance drivers, which is why this opportunity to make it crystal clear is so important.

Thank you for your long-standing record of supporting the women and men in emergency medical services, and for your support for LD 1605.