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Testimony of J. Sam Hurley, MPH, EMPS, NRP

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

Department of Public Safety

Neither for Nor Against of LD 1605

“An Act to License Ambulance Drivers Who Are Not Licensed to Provide Emergency Medical Services”

Presented by Representative McDonald of Stonington

BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Public Hearing: Wednesday, May 12, 2021

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

My name is Sam Hurley and I am the Director of Maine Emergency Medical Services, Maine EMS, within the Department of Public Safety. I am testifying on behalf of Maine Department of Public Safety and Maine EMS neither for nor against LD 1605, *“An Act to License Ambulance Drivers Who Are Not Licensed to Provide Emergency Medical Services.”*

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has made the issue of non-licensed ambulance operators quite apparent within our overall system. These individuals serve a critical role for many agencies that use them as part of their response system where they have one licensed clinician on board and a driver. Last year, Maine EMS developed an automated notification system that alerted every licensed EMS clinician documented on a call for any exposure to a patient that was later found to be suffering from COVID-19 disease. We quickly found that non-licensed operators were not being notified because they were not traditionally included in our documentation system. In the

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interim, we were able to amend this issue to ensure that all persons on the these calls that are connected with the EMS system were able to be contacted through this mechanism but it highlighted the reality that we didn't know the expansiveness of EMS operators.

This once again became apparent at the time of initial vaccine roll out. There was no way to understand whether someone was a frontline worker that drove the ambulance one time every two years or someone who was employed by an agency as a driver within our system. For that reason, it was impossible for us to establish who was eligible for vaccination and who was not as the vaccine was extremely scarce at that time. This legislation would serve to ensure that issues like this do not arise again in the future because we would have real-time information about who is and is not authorized as an ambulance operator within the State of Maine.

We also have concerns about the requirement in Section 3, Paragraph 1 that there is consultation with the Emergency Communication Bureau within the Public Utilities Commission as there is no other licensed EMS professional that requires such consultation, including emergency medical dispatchers. The PUC only has authority over the dispatching systems, Maine EMS retains regulatory authority over the emergency medical dispatch centers and dispatchers. Additionally, we would recommend removing everything in Paragraph 4 after the first sentence. This license type does not relate to the Emergency Services Communication Bureau nor the Public Utilities Commission and so the Board should not be restricted by having to consult with them before taking action, as needed.

We appreciate your time and consideration. I am more than happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time, but please feel free to reach out to me anytime if there is any additional information I can offer you and/or the Committee.

Thank you.