



Northern Light
Health

LD 526 An Act to Provide Funding to Emergency Medical Services Organizations

Testimony in Support

March 20, 2023

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Lisa Harvey-McPherson RN. I am providing testimony on behalf of Northern Light Health and our member organizations commenting in support of this bill. Northern Light Health member organizations include 10 hospitals located in southern, central, eastern and northern Maine, 8 nursing facilities, air and ground ambulance, behavioral health, addiction treatment, pharmacy, primary and specialty care practices and a state-wide home care and hospice program. Ninety three percent of Maine's population lives in the Northern Light Health service area. Northern Light Health is also proud to be one of Maine's largest employers with over 12,000 employees statewide.

Northern Light Health operates five licensed transporting ambulance services. These services provide response to 911 emergency calls in some of Maine's most rural areas, working with nearly 100 communities and unorganized townships. Further, our services are an integral part of Maine's interfacility transport system, whereby patients needing acute care are transferred from community hospitals to tertiary care centers.

Our hospitals and ambulance services alike acutely recognize the impacts of workforce shortages and impossible pathways to sustainability for the state's ambulance services. We are increasingly called upon to support rural towns that lose or are unable to staff their existing ambulance service. None of our ambulance services cover the costs of provision of the services through operations. While we recognize it is a key component of our mission to be in the communities we live and serve, the reimbursement equation at the federal, state and commercial levels continues to present an unsolvable math equation.

We are commenting in support of the funding proposal for our state's struggling emergency medical services system and feel that this could bring much needed stability as the Maine Emergency Medical Services Board works through its strategic plan. Of course, this bill alone does not bring long-term stability and sustainability, and to that end, we urge the legislature to strongly consider the other bills introduced this session, which speak to the long-term sustainability of Maine's EMS System.

We look forward to better understanding the formula on the distribution of these funds. We also feel the bill should include very specific guidance on how the funding can be used. By way of an example, the funding should be dedicated to workforce, non-major capital, or general operation expenses.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your support of our Emergency Medical Services System.

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Northern Light Health

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