



Maine Municipal
Association

60 COMMUNITY DRIVE
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04330-9486
(207) 623-8428
www.memun.org

Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Opposition of

LD 1291 – An Act To Reduce Fire Response Time by Eliminating Standardized Dispatch Protocol for Fire 9-1-1 Calls.

April 15, 2021

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry and members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee, my name is Neal Goldberg, and I am providing testimony in opposition of LD 1291 on behalf of MMA's Legislative Policy Committee.

The Association opposes this legislation on the basis that it reverses the standardization municipalities have grown to appreciate and because it eliminates state funding to support training activities that will continue even after requirements for standardization are eliminated under this bill.

Standardized dispatch protocols are beneficial to municipalities and there is concern that eliminating the requirement for them will create unforeseen problems and confusion. Standardization allows municipalities to share services, provide mutual aid in a consistent fashion, and hire dispatchers or per diem employees trained in other jurisdictions. Eliminating standardized protocols will reduce the number of qualified individuals for hire and likely create duplicative training. As a result, municipalities are apt to keep the standardized protocols in place.

Eliminating the funding for dispatch protocol training and resources does not diminish the responsibility to properly train dispatchers and equip public safety answering points. This bill withdraws state support for emergency service training even though there remains an expectation that municipalities properly train dispatchers.

This bill would also impact how emergencies are handled, potentially at the expense of those experiencing them, since standardized dispatch protocols ensure the dispatcher asks all of the required questions and collects needed information to best prepare emergency personnel arriving at the scene. This creates the greatest chances that emergencies are resolved with minimal harm to health or property.

Some members noted that the standard dispatch protocols could be modified in order to accomplish the bill's goal of reducing fire response time. This goal can be achieved without complete elimination of useful standardized dispatch protocols.