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LD 1291, An Act to Reduce Fire Response Time by Eliminating Standardized Dispatch Protocols for Fire 9-1-1 Calls

April 15, 2021

Chair Lawrence, Chair Berry, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, and my name is Stephen Gorden and, in addition to serving as chair of the board of commissioners for Cumberland County, I am writing today in my role as board president of the Maine County Commissioners Association. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to the Committee in support of LD 1291.

About MCCA. Briefly, the Maine County Commissioners Association was established in 1890 to assist Maine's county government in providing vital services to Maine citizens in a responsive, efficient, and credible manner. The Association is based in Augusta and currently represents 15 of Maine's 16 counties and is governed by a board with representation from each participating county.

About LD 1291. Under current law, E-9-1-1 centers must engage with callers by utilizing a formal "protocol" to elicit important information about an emergency call to later assist with dispatch. For the majority of 9-1-1 calls, which related to EMT and medical services, these protocols are particularly valuable. However, conducting these protocols takes time, sometimes delaying emergency response.

LD 1291 seeks to modify current law for the limited instance of fire calls, which are a relatively small minority of all emergency calls. These calls tend to be less complex than medical calls and often require immediate response. Nonetheless, Maine law requires 9-1-1 operators to complete these protocols, potentially delaying response to a fire.

In researching this bill, we understand that the need for protocols in the fire arena varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The needs of urban areas in particular may differ from the needs of suburban or rural areas. Given this variation in need, we support the premise of the bill, which is to remove mandatory protocols for fire emergency calls. This does not mean that protocols will not be used, but rather they can be utilized with more flexibility. To the extent this change may help speed up emergency responses to fires, we believe this is a helpful step.

Comments of MCCA re LD 1291

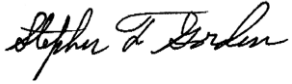
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For these reasons, our Association supports LD 1291, and we encourage the Committee to give this bill an “ought to pass” report.

Conclusion. If you have questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen F. Gorden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Stephen Gorden
President

cc: Commissioner Brian Hobart, Chair, MCCA Legislative Committee
James I. Cohen, Verrill Dana, LLP, MCCA Legislative Counsel