



19 April 2021

RE: LD1258 An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Stakeholder Group Convened by the Emergency Medical Services Board Related to Reimbursement Rates for Ambulance Services

Hon. Senator Heather Sanborn
Hon. Representative Denise Tepler
Distinguished Members of the Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services Committee

My name is Thomas Judge from Port Clyde, Maine. I am speaking today in favor of LD1258.

As background I served as a volunteer for Paramedic for St. George EMS for over forty years, managed the predecessor of what is now Northern Light Medical Transport in Bangor, and am the Executive Director of LifeFlight of Maine. Previously I also served on the Board of Maine EMS for ten years including a term as Chair.

I served on the Stakeholder Group representing our ground ambulances and helped author the recommendations in the unanimous report leading to this piece of legislation. I thank the Committee for taking this important issue up with LD2105 and now LD1258.

I have been immersed in the issue of surprise billing for emergency services nationally through serving on the National DOT Office of General Counsel Air Ambulance Patient Billing Committee and worked extensively on the Hill for the passage of HR133 which includes the No Surprises Act. (NSA) I will note the challenging issues of ground EMS in the NSA were similar to the original LD2105 challenges of out of network ground EMS. I believe this legislation can serve as a national model.

I will also note air ambulances are not included in the LD1258 and further that LifeFlight is in network with most of the major carriers in Maine. My comments are based on my knowledge and close work with EMS agencies and communities across the state.

The focus my comments on the needs of our ground-based EMS services across the state, especially those in our rural areas.

As the Stakeholder Group Report illustrates our EMS services are operating at the margins with costs significantly higher than reimbursement. This is especially true for our low volume rural and super rural services.

Each of the Report recommendations builds forward and it is incredibly important to assure that each of the Sections of LD1258 are enacted as they will help enable network participation via a "standard offer" format while stabilizing the underlying financing for our EMS services which have been upended by increased costs in the current pandemic. We will note the improved reimbursement methodology using a multiple of the Medicare rate benchmark and the rural and super rural add on payments which are a component of Medicare reimbursement were compromises by both the providers and insurance carriers.

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As a long time leader in Maine's EMS system I will also note that Sections 4 assuring transparency and data in the development of new EMS services for which we have a model developed by the National Rural Health Association which has been used in a number of Maine communities; Section 5 assuring better cost data for the standard offer post December 2023, and Section 6 continuing to look at the underpinnings of the EMS system are each essential to the overall effort as we look forward to assuring service coverage to all of Maine delivered in the most efficient manner and highest quality possible. It is critical that we continue to look more deeply and broadly at systemic influences to assure a sustainable high performing EMS system for Maine.

The two concerns I note with the legislation are:

- a) to make sure there is sufficient momentum and focus to build the data needed prior to Section 1 sunseting in December 2023 for the Legislature to accomplish any additional changes.
- b) recognizing Committee jurisdiction, assuring that MaineCare also match the Medicare rural and super rural add on payments. Our rural EMS services are at significant financial risk and daily there are not enough resources to manage both 911 response and emergency interhospital transport. The latter is a growing issue for every hospital in the State.

I am happy to answer any questions the Committee has now or at the work session.

Sincerely,

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