

Written Testimony by Bradley Reed, President, Professional Fire Fighters of Vermont on S.241

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to provide testimony on S.241, a bill which has a direct impact on our members. My name is Bradley Reed, I am the President of the Professional Firefighters of Vermont (PFFV). Our members are the paid professional union firefighters, EMT's, and paramedics who belong to the International Association of Firefighters, and work for 11 of the career fire and EMS services in Vermont. Eight of our eleven locals provide primary EMS transport services for their communities, two provide EMS first response service, and one provides first response service as needed. As a group who has a significant role in providing EMS services, we have concerns with this proposal so we must oppose this legislation as drafted.

Over the past few weeks we have heard testimony illustrating a wide array of issues the EMS community faces while trying to provide the best service possible to our citizens and the people who visit our great state. Improvements to our EMS system have been made over the past several years following the passage of legislation taken up in this committee in 2012 when several changes were mandated. Act 155 established directives for several improvements seeking to enhance efficiency and improve service by creating a balanced EMS advisory committee comprised of all stakeholders who would work with the Office of Emergency Medical Services to provide solutions to a variety of concerns. You may be familiar with some of the mandates established by Act 155. It called for establishing minimum standards for the credentialing of EMS personnel by their affiliated agency, training or assisting in training, drafting written protocols, establishing license levels for EMS personnel, creating the EMS advisory committee and more. Most of the initiatives required by legislative action have been accomplished. The work done by the Office of EMS in partnership with the EMS advisory committee to accomplish what they have is not insignificant.

The fire service in Vermont plays a large role in the EMS community. Annually there are roughly 89,000 EMS responses with a portion of those being transfers from one hospital to another, and the others being 911 emergencies. In the 2016 Division of Fire

Safety Annual Report which tracks fire department responses, there were a little more than 23,000 EMS incidents reported and I should note that 48 fire departments did not report their statistics. Of those EMS calls, our members responded to 14,500 and our members from Barre Town EMS responded to an additional 3,700. Of the approximately 3,000 licensed emergency medical providers in the state, 240 of them belong to the PFFV. So while we represent 8% of the licensed EMS population in Vermont, we respond to roughly 25% of all EMS calls.

We recognize the range of challenges presented to everyone who delivers EMS service in Vermont. There is no debate on the need to improve the ability for our agencies to collect fees for our service, to address the need for improved response times, to grow educational opportunities at an affordable cost, and address some of the other issues raised during previous testimony. However, we feel the proposed change to the makeup of the EMS advisory committee would work against the common goal we share of improving our service. Solutions can only be developed when stakeholders who have intimate knowledge of their issues have an opportunity to share their concerns in a balanced group who can then decide how best to proceed. The current makeup of the committee is working as evidenced by its ability to partner with the Office of EMS to implement the directives outlined in Act 155. The committee currently has representatives with constituents from each of the current EMS districts, and it is balanced so that no one agency has more influence than the other. We feel the EMS advisory committee should continue to remain as is.

In the interest of continuing efforts to improve the delivery of EMS in our state, we would support some of the suggestions made by committee members who would like to examine the possibility of providing funding for training. The committee has discussed the possibility of a future EMS academy similar to that of the fire service and law enforcement academies. We feel that future discussion on whether or not municipalities should have local EMS plans should continue as recommended in the 2014 report to the legislature rather than cut that out. We look forward to our continued work with all of the other EMS agencies, the Office of EMS, and the legislature to improve the delivery of EMS services in Vermont.