

1-9-2024, House Healthcare testimony on VDH Legislative report conducted by VDH and EMM (Travis Howe)

- Hello and thank you for taking the time to hear us today. My name is Adam Heuslein, I have been an EMS provider in Vermont for 30+ years, 25 of those years have been as the director of Glover Ambulance located in the rural Northeast Kingdom.
- I have participated in several EMS studies over the decades. I feel that as a member of the Regional Study Committee, this report missed the mark on several issues facing EMS. This report does not address the concerns and equally important the solutions that our peers working in the field and the town administrators have offered
- However basic and generic this report turned out, there are a few points that were common themes from those that provided input and would have a vast impact on the delivery of EMS in Vermont.
  - As others will/have mention; EMS must be considered an essential service
  - Continued ongoing funding for EMS education is Piermont to the success of EMS in the future. House bill H.622 introduced by Rep. Sims addresses this.
  - Reimbursement does not come close to matching the cost of doing business. Although the report discussed legislation being taken at the federal level there is little chance the funding structure will change, leaving a false sense of security.
  - Although the “Special Funds” was identified as a component of EMS District operations, 62% of the Districts do not have access to the funds allocated due to business office regulations.
  - Modernizing EMS Communications is a critical part of Pre-Hospital Emergency care and should be considered by this body.
  - The report mentions “the system is NOT in crisis” I think most every EMS agency will tell you otherwise, as represented in the EMS

Advisory Committee's report that is being submitted. with an increasing call volume, declining number of volunteers, and reimbursement rates that do not cover the cost of service delivery we are are certainly in crisis

- A few of the items this report failed to mention are:
- This report didn't gather comprehensive data from all services. We still don't have the data we need to understand what's working, what the gaps are to identify the resources needed to stabilize the system.
  - A common theme we heard at the regional meeting is that the EMS office is critically understaffed. It is imperative that the staffing level of the Department be aligned with the needs of Emergency Medical Services across the state. The additional staffing should be utilized to help support EMS agencies, collect data to improve the system and bolster the care provided to Vermonters.
  - How will any of the recommendations be funded? Placing greater financial responsibility on EMS services across the state will strain the system further. We need a complete overhaul to stabilize EMS funding
  - Although the report mentions a "Task Force" to do XXXXX; in the respect of the report would be a colossal waste of time and money. EMS agencies already have mutual aid agreements among one and another, there are also existing mechanisms in place that could help support the system.

Rep. Sims introduced H.622 and although this bill will not solve all of EMS's problems, it is a critical step forward. That bill would:

1. turn the Emergency Medical Services Advisory Committee into a board and revise its duties to include developing and maintaining a five-year statewide emergency medical services plan for Vermont
2. create the Emergency Medical Services Task Force (for a limited time) to oversee and manage all phases of the development, design, and implementation of a statewide emergency medical services system in Vermont, (modeled after the great work the Government Operations committees did last year on Dispatch)
3. expand the circumstances under which ambulance service providers are reimbursed for delivering services to Medicaid beneficiaries, and
4. appropriate funds to provide training for emergency medical services personnel

**In conclusion;** EMS has been around for 50 years, 30 of those years I have been involved in Vermont and in rural EMS. I have seen several reports commissioned and participated in most. There have been many changes over the years, most for the better, some for the worse, none came with additional sustainable and attainable funding. In my 30 years I have never been more scared for the profession than I am right now. I feel the Current administration seems disconnected from the reality of EMS delivery in Vermont. The suggestions offered by subject matter experts have fallen on deaf ears. There is little to no support financially or administratively from either the Department or the governing bodies. If Pre-Hospital health care is going to continue in Vermont We need your help! We need your help to help us help others in their greatest time of need.

Please consider H.622 it serves as a valuable role in keeping the discussion open, productive and meaningful. I encourage this committee to review H.622 and weigh your time and energy into meaningful change for the Profession.

Thank you for your time.