

Testimony from Brian M. Daniels, Executive Director
H 6282 – Ambulance Service Coordinating Board
House Committee on Health & Human Services – May 5, 2021

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify. We appreciate Representative Fellela's sponsorship of this bill. This legislation is greatly needed to ensure that the Department of Health's rulemaking on emergency medical transport services is balanced and reflects the input from all stakeholders.

As members of the committee may recall, two years ago, the House passed H 6169, Representative Fellela's bill to add a municipal official to the Ambulance Services Board. That legislation was prompted after the Department of Health proposed a rule change for Emergency Medical Services in 2018 that would have mandated additional positions and staffing requirements for local EMS services and established new standards for ambulances. The Department of Health had not prepared a fiscal note, as required under law, and the proposal was later projected to cost cities and towns at least \$900,000 per year. When the League reminded the Department of Health that the state's unfunded mandate law prevented them from enacting a regulation with an unfunded local mandate until the next fiscal year (RI General Laws § 45-13-9.1), they removed the unfunded mandates from the proposal.

That experience pointed out the importance of including municipal officials as stakeholders in the EMS rulemaking process. The House responded by passing H 6169, a League-supported bill that added a municipal official to the Ambulance Services Board and which was signed into law in 2019. Mayor Polisena, who is a registered nurse, serves as the municipal representative on the Board, appointed by the Senate President. Now, earlier this year, the Department of Health proposed new regulations, bypassing the Board entirely. As we have seen, regulatory changes to EMS can have financial and operational impacts on cities and towns. Further, in some communities, EMS staffing and operations are guided by collective bargaining agreements. The Department of Health needs to ensure that its recommended changes to EMS regulations promote public safety while also respecting local control.

For these reasons, the RI League of Cities and Towns supports H 6282, which would require proposed regulations to be approved by the Ambulance Services Coordinating Board – particularly those that have fiscal and staffing impacts on providers like cities and towns. This change will ensure that regulations balance the needs of all affected parties. We urge the committee to pass H 6282, and we appreciate your consideration of our views.