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Testimony
Senate Bill 2004
Senate Appropriations Committee – Human Resources Division
Wednesday, January 14 2021; 8:30 a.m.
North Dakota Emergency Medical Services Association

Good morning, Chairman Holmberg and members of the committee. My name is Kelly Dollinger, I am the President of the North Dakota Emergency Medical Services Association. I am here today in support of SB 2004.

The Health Department's budget includes \$6.875 million in assistance to rural ambulance services to offset operational costs that are not recovered through the billing process. A recent collection of ambulance budget information found that, on average, it costs an ambulance service \$1,487.89 per call while the average reimbursement averages only \$876.87. Since the last time we testified for this committee, the cost per call has increased by 34.5% while the reimbursement has increased by 2.2%. Additionally, it is important to note that ambulance services are supported locally through property taxes totaling just over \$10 million in 2019, which is a 35% increase over 4 years. It is clear that rural ambulance services do not have the economies of scale sufficient to be self-sustainable and require support from their local communities and the State to remain operational.

Based on the distribution formula legislated last session, the need for funding exceeded the appropriated amount by over \$4 million for the biennium. This resulted in services calculated grant amount being reduced by 48% last year. We respectfully request that this committee consider increasing the appropriation to rural ambulance services to better meet the needs calculated in the distribution formula.

Additionally, there is \$846,000 allocated for training grants. These grants are important to offset the cost of recruiting and training new volunteers to staff rural ambulances.

We greatly appreciate the Legislatures commitment to rural ambulances. Your continued support is needed to ensure that the residents and visitors of North Dakota have reliable, high quality access to emergency medical services.

This concludes my testimony, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.