

Testimony
Public Safety and Transportation Committee
Wednesday, August 4, 2010
North Dakota Department of Health

Good afternoon, Chairman O'Connell and members of the Public Safety and Transportation Committee. My name is Tom Nehring, and I am the director of the Division of Emergency Medical Services and Trauma for the North Dakota Department of Health. I have been asked to provide comments about the revised bill draft to implement a statewide emergency medical services funding plan.

We have a number of concerns regarding the bill draft, including:

- While we believe it is our responsibility to establish and update a strategic plan for integrated emergency medical services in this state, we believe this requirement should be in our rules rather than in statute.
- The Department of Health has contracted with an organization to conduct a study of emergency medical services in North Dakota. Because that study may identify different issues or recommend a different number of emergency medical services funding areas, we feel the changes in this bill are premature. It may be better to wait until the study is complete before making any major changes to the EMS system in North Dakota.
- We are concerned with the language in the bill establishing a fixed number of emergency medical services funding areas. While 88 may be an appropriate number today, changes may occur within the state and the emergency medical services arena that may affect that number in the future.
- We are also concerned with the establishment of an oversight board for each primary emergency medical services funding area and the description of board duties. This provision would result in 88 independent oversight boards with broad general powers concerning ambulance services, including developing performance standards and plans, as well as monitoring these standards. Each board would be independent and may establish many rules for ambulance services that could be at odds with existing statewide rules. Local boards have been established in other states, and the results have been chaotic.

- We are concerned about the amount of money it would take to support 88 oversight boards.
- The bill does not provide an allocation to the Department of Health for administering the funds.

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