

Testimony

Public Safety and Transportation Committee

Thursday, September 23, 2010

F-M Ambulance Service

Good afternoon, Chairman O'Connell and members of the Public Safety and Transportation Committee. My name is Tim Meyer, and I am the Quality Resource Manager at F-M Ambulance Service which provides advanced life support (ALS) ambulance services to Fargo and West Fargo as well as providing ALS support to all of the basic life support ambulances and quick response units of Cass County. I am here in support of the bill draft to provide funding for rural emergency medical services.

I want to assure you that the bill draft you have before you will not result in the state funding F-M Ambulance Service. As the largest ambulance service in North Dakota we have enough run volume to financially support our operation. Our organization is concerned with keeping the rural ambulance services viable. Without rural ambulance services in the state, people suffering from acute illness or injury would have a long wait for ambulance transport. In addition we do not want to absorb a small town's operation area when our costs to deliver ambulance service are greater because we do not have business model that relies on volunteers.

That being said, although we want to see rural ambulances in North Dakota survive, we do not believe it is in the best interest of serving the citizens of ND, nor is it good public policy to allow the use of state financial assistance to subsidize other ambulance services in an operations area that is financially self-sustaining. For that reason we strongly support establishing ambulance operations areas. Ambulance operations areas will assure that neighboring ambulance services will not compete with one another thereby diluting much needed efficiency, and ambulance operations areas are the key component in assuring all areas of the state are served with reasonable emergency medical services. The Health Department has already established the ambulance response areas for the entire state so this work is essentially complete; it needs only to be authorized in statute. The bill would require the license holder to provide ambulance service to all points in an operations area regardless of financial or other operational disincentives to do so. No other operator could establish licensure to operate in that area if all performance standards were being met. However the public would still have a remedy if the ambulance service is not meeting standards.

This type of licensing has been used in other states. It has eliminated the motivation of ambulance companies to only provide service to profitable geographic areas. North Dakota would be better served in not making public safety operations, such as ambulance services, competitors with each other.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.