

HB 1493

Senate Human Services Committee

Testimony of Shelby Floberg

In Support

February 15, 2021

Senator Lee and Members of the Committee:

I am offering testimony in support of HB 1493, which would provide for ambulance service operation funding. North Dakota is home to many rural areas and small communities. Rural ambulances, just as ambulances in larger towns, must maintain high standards of care. Rural ambulances receive less income than larger ambulance services due to a smaller number of patient calls. Income from insurance and patient calls is needed to help maintain these services. Rural ambulances must purchase vehicles, medical supplies, and expensive equipment to provide care for those in need. Ambulance staff must also stay up to date with training. These expenses can add an abundance of debt for smaller services. Due to rural ambulances mainly receiving income from patient calls, extra funding is needed to keep rural ambulance services in operation.

Many small-town ambulance services are finding it more difficult to find volunteers. These services have to increase on call and run pay just to retain squad members. Some rural services have to hire staff from other services to cover call due to the lack of volunteers. This is much more expensive than having a squad made up of volunteers.

There tends to be lower income and lack of insurance in rural areas, individuals then can not pay their ambulance bill, the service must then write off this debt. This results in losing money. For rural ambulances to remain in service, funding for service expenses must be distributed. Otherwise, many rural services may have to close. Individuals in rural areas would then have to wait for an ambulance from a larger city to get to them, which would likely lead to more deaths and severe illness. Being part of a small community in North Dakota, I see the

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importance of rural ambulance services. Being the daughter of my community's ambulance squad president, I have seen the tremendous efforts of rural services firsthand. I am grateful for the hard work that volunteer ambulance members put forth. It is important for small town services to stay in operation for the safety of community members. With all of this in mind, I urge a "do pass" recommendation on HB 1493. Thank you for your time.