

Public Health Committee

Testimony on Raised Bill 6518 "An Act Concerning Emergency Medical Services"

Public Hearing: Friday, March 15, 2013

Submitted by: John Elsesser, Town Manager, Town of Coventry

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on Raised Bill 6518, "An Act Concerning Emergency Medical Services." On behalf of the Coventry Town Council I am writing in support of Raised Bill No. 6518. Additionally we believe some modifications could strengthen the emergency response system within the State of Connecticut.

The current system of providing emergency medical services is broken. The State grants what amounts to an exclusive franchise for ambulance service and has virtually cut out Towns from any oversight and control of service within their borders. Instead, a non-responsive State agency sits back and watches as the system falls apart.

The Town of Coventry is living through a crisis which could have been avoided if the State accepted their responsibility. The former Chief of Coventry Ambulance and also a Lieutenant in the Coventry Volunteer Fire Association have both been arrested for sexual assault of Junior Fire Fighters. Despite complaints from the Town and citizens, the Office of Emergency Medical Services has remained silent over the years even recently granting a convicted felon who served time for sexual assaulting a 15-year old an EMT/instructor's license. This allowed a culture of corruption and immorality to fester until children were molested. They hid behind the protection of inadequate State oversight.

Section 4 (b) of the proposed bill would grant the Town some say in who provides service and will help assure accountable service to the local community.

The Coventry Town Council also requests that this bill be amended to prohibit individuals with felony convictions for violent crimes against others, or crimes which would today get you listed on the Sex Offenders Registry from being granted EMT certification. Today the State Office of Emergency Medical Services remains unresponsive to our Town leaders who are seeking at least a suspension of the EMT credentials for these two arrested individuals. One is out on bail and could continue to provide EMS services. We believe the public should be protected from these types of predators. A similar failure to suspend credentials in Vernon was on the news this week.

Had the State not issued an EMT and EMT Instructors license to a felon the tragic chain of events which led to the sexual assault of two Junior Fire Fighters could have been avoided.

If the State is unwilling to protect its citizens please allow Towns more control over the provision of emergency medical services and require a suspension of all licenses upon arrests and revocation upon conviction.