

Testimony In Support Of
General Assembly Raised Bill No. 6518, LCO No. 3111
An Act Concerning Emergency Medical Services

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Honorable Chairperson, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Public Health Committee:

I first want to thank you for allowing us to be here to testify on Raised Bill No. 6518, which is An Act Concerning Emergency Medical Services. Due to the expanded population in the Town of South Windsor, the level of ambulance services in our community has been very important to us. We have noticed that there is an aging population, and there have been more calls for advanced life support services. Back in the 1980s, a volunteer ambulance corps was put together, and they were called South Windsor Volunteer Ambulance Corps. This ambulance corps' goal in the future was not just to have basic life support services, but to also include advanced life support service in the future, otherwise known as paramedic service.

During the seventeen years that I have been here in South Windsor, I have tried to work with our local basic life support ambulance service and have been somewhat successful. A few years ago, the South Windsor Volunteer Ambulance Service decided to utilize paid personnel and change their name to South Windsor Ambulance Corps. This was a dramatic change for the Town of South Windsor, and the Town Council did not endorse this change. They became aware of this change when it was presented to them during a public meeting. During this period of time, South Windsor Ambulance Corps was paying for some of their own expenses, but the Town was providing gas, workers' compensation, and a space at the Police Department. When we built the new fire station, it was in the works for the Ambulance Corps to have a bona fide space in that station with two ambulance bays, offices, and sleeping quarters. It was during this time that they had changed their organization to a nonprofit paid staff. The Town of South Windsor still allowed them to utilize the facility, but they would have to pay for their own workers' compensation, fuel, and we have requested that they pay rent. To this date, they have not done any of this, and we continue to negotiate with them to pay for those services.

We have told them before they moved in that we would allow them to stay at this facility, but they would need to bring an advanced life support system to the Town of South Windsor. We told them we would continue to support them the best we can, but they needed to advance to the next level of service that the Town deserves and needs.

Through this period of five or six years, the Corps has never once sent any one of their EMTs to school nor have they hired any paramedics to provide the level of service that the Town Council requested. We found out through the Office of the Emergency Medical Services that local government has no say regarding the type of service it wants provided for the medical needs of

its community. We find this to be deplorable, as we now have two ambulance services, one private ALS and SWAC, going to the same call, which only increases the cost to our taxpayers and makes Emergency Management Services very confusing. This Bill will allow municipalities to make decisions regarding medical service arrangements.

To give you an example, the Town of South Windsor will be issuing a Request for Proposal. Upon that Request, and after receiving information from various ALS companies, if the Town were to just have two ALS ambulances in Town, it would cost approximately \$700,000. They would only be allowed to respond to ALS calls as South Windsor Ambulance Corps is the registered ambulance for BLS calls. I also found out that if the Town were able to choose its own ambulance service, that this service would not charge the Town one penny if it responded to all of the calls. They could survive on their own without any contribution from the Town if they were the sole provider of services. Again, this would all be done with a Request for Proposal through public bidding in order to make sure we can identify the level of service we want in Town.

I find that the current system resembles an unfunded mandate. If you are willing to provide the best medical services for your community, you have to pay an exorbitant amount of money which would raise taxes in these tough economic times. This would hurt all of our taxpayers, especially senior citizens. All of this has to happen in order to provide services that we could otherwise get for free.

This Bill will allow us to provide the best quality of service at no cost to the Town. We feel that the law, as written, almost creates a monopoly for some of the services. There are very tough restrictions, and you have to prove negligence when trying to remove a provider from your community. This makes no sense to me, as they are two different levels of service. The Town should have the ability to choose.

The Town Council and I are also concerned that South Windsor Ambulance Corps would not be able to move forward with an ALS system. After all those years with free rent and gas, they still could not hire paramedics. Their ambulances seem to be out of service often. This makes us wonder about their ability to move forward knowing that they are struggling to make ends meet now. It is apparent that they have not moved forward on some of the suggested services that have come from our Town Departments as well as the Town Council.

The system that is in place might have been good when most of our ambulance services were volunteer. Now that we have an aging and growing community with more traffic in our area, we find it imperative that the level of service should be greater than basic, and we should be able to implement a Request for Proposal to get the best possible provider in order to secure the safety of our residents in a medical situation.

I feel that all communities in the State of Connecticut deserve the ability to make a choice. We make choices for our roads, our schools, our police services, and our fire services. I find it ludicrous that we do not have the ability to choose the one service that has a dramatic impact on us. I urge the Committee to approve Bill No. 6518 so that municipalities may sit down in an

expeditious and conscious manner to determine the level of service and needs for medical ambulances and to be able to provide that service at the lowest possible cost.

I thank you for your time and look forward to a favorable response to this Bill.