OXFORD
Ambulance Association

Testimony – HB 6518 AN ACT CONCERNING EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson, Senator Welch, Representative Srinivasan, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jerry Schwab and I am the Executive Director of the Oxford Ambulance Association. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on HB 6518, An Act Concerning Emergency Medical Services. I will be testifying today in **opposition** to this bill – particularly the changes made to the state's PSA system.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in the State of Connecticut provides a critical service to our communities. Essential, lifesaving services, such as this, require stability and reliability. This proposed bill would destabilize our system and bring us exactly back to where we were 40 years ago. While the Bill may arguably have some benefits to a few municipalities, it will also have devastating negative effects to the majority of ambulance services and municipalities in the State.

Currently, the State of Connecticut is divided into geographical areas called Primary Service Area's (PSA). These PSA's are assigned by the Commissioner of the Department of Public Health and supervised by DPH's Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) through the Commissioner. This system was instituted 40 years ago to specifically address those issues that we are worried about today: instability, unreliability, unhealthy competition, political gamesmanship, and a lack of surge capacity.

The Bill proposes that each individual municipality have the ability to assign its ambulance provider at will. This would allow any municipality, at any time, to change its ambulance provider without cause. This puts all EMS services in the State into a position of having to "play politics" in order to ensure our survival. If this legislation were to pass, many communities could be faced with a constant flip-flop of EMS providers. This would create an environment that is unstable and unreliable, and detrimental to the patients we serve.

P.O. BOX 515 • OXFORD, CONNECTICUT 06478

OXFORD
Ambulance Association

Addressing what may be the legitimate concerns of a few municipalities at the expense of others is not a desirable way to fix this problem. Many communities in Connecticut would suffer if this bill were to pass. Mine is one of them. I run a non-profit, basic ambulance service in Oxford. We receive paramedic-level care from a regional non-profit paramedic provider. We are very happy with the service we receive. We pay only $40,000 a year for it. However, this paramedic provider serves six other municipalities. If just one of those towns chose to sever their agreement with our regional provider, there is a very real risk that this provider could no longer survive financially. The cost to my town of providing this paramedic service on our own would eclipse $300,000. This is obviously undesirable and burdensome.

Please keep in mind that there is currently a system in place that allows a municipality to hold its provider accountable to the town's EMS plan. This method was created by this legislature in 2000 with the passage of Public Act 00-151. A municipality is also allowed to petition the Commissioner to remove and reassign a PSA at any time. To the best of my knowledge, no municipality has formally requested a PSA reassignment since Public Act 00-151 was passed. One cannot argue that the current remedies do not work if they have never been attempted.

I ask that you please recognize the unintended but extremely detrimental consequences to towns like mine as you consider this legislation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jerry Schwab, EMT-P, EMS-I
Executive Director
Oxford Ambulance Association