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Sen. Gerratana, Rep. Johnson and Members of the Public Health Committee,

**I urge you to REJECT HB 6522 Concerning Antiepileptic Medication.**

I have volunteered worked for commercial EMS services for 17 years as an EMT and paramedic. The current EMS system is not set up to accommodate the request by the Public Health Committee to require all ambulances to be equipped with DIASTAT. Diastat is valium manufactured in a way that can be absorbed through the muscle membranes of the rectum.

It is my understanding that only one family has requested the public health committee to change the entire EMS system to accommodate their child who is prone to seizures. To my knowledge they are the only one to do so, despite the thousands of residents statewide who have seizures, including children. It is poor legislative precedent to change an entire statewide EMS system on this singular family, ESPECIALLY without knowledge of the drug itself, its side effects and alternatives that exist today. The drafting of this legislation clearly ignores the scientific and outcome based practice for incorporating medications and procedures into EMS protocols. The legislation must be rejected for the following additional reasons:

- In basic terms, the EMS system is largely made up of EMT basics and Paramedics. EMT Basics take a 150 hour course to recognize signs and symptoms, and basic non-invasive treatments. It is essential to keep this course of study at a minimal level to ensure a ready number of responders statewide and not burden the program with quick add-ons that would increase the cost and length of the program. It is already difficult to staff many volunteer organizations as it is.
- Paramedics undergo an additional 13 months or more of study which includes study of pharmacokinetics; drug classes. They are more properly trained to treat active seizures, as well as any side effect which may occur from administering the drug itself.
- The types of medications used in the EMS system as well as healthcare at large change over time. Many medications have been in short supply nationwide in recent years. Last year there was a shortage of epinephrine. There is currently a shortage of dextrose. There very well could be a shortage of diastat or valium at some point. Enacting a statute mandating any particular medication is extremely

problematic if there is a shortage of that medication or if medical practice prefers the use of a newer or different medication.

- Therefore it is poor public policy for the legislature to legislate any particular drug or medical procedure
- Paramedics already currently carry at least one anti-epileptic drug. They operate under the medical direction of a local hospital within one of the five regions in the state. These drugs vary depending on the hospital as well.
- Each and every town is required to have a plan for a paramedic to respond if they are needed.
- Emergency Medical Dispatching is devised to dispatch a paramedic to calls that usually involve seizures.
- Only a very few seizure calls ever require a medication intervention. These are indicated when a person has seizures without a lucid 'postictal' period in between them. Otherwise, the most high risk portion of a seizure is usually a fall when it first begins

Diastat is again not a recommended medication in the face of alternatives in use today and I urge rejection of this bill.

I can appreciate the concern of the parents of this child, and why they brought their concerns over timely intervention to the legislature. Over the years, the legislature has made numerous laws and rules regarding what medications can be dispensed or carried by students for their own use. Unfortunately, many of the regulations have created a legalistic culture that prevent students from practicing safe and responsible practices to care for themselves or allowing other adults, teachers or volunteers for assisting them.

Loosening the law in some way to allow a volunteer or teacher to administer a particular medication specific to a particular student if it is warranted would be a more reasonable solution to the present problem. This can include enhancing the state's Good Samaritan Law, providing liability from protection or training to those who in good faith might assist a student in taking medications. Public service announcements also should instill altruistic attitudes for helping other citizens and diminish the perceived liability for not doing so.

If you have any other questions regarding the EMS system or the practice regarding seizures, feel free to contact me.