City of Milford, Connecticut

- Founded in 1639 -

Benjamin G. Blake
Mayor

City Hall
110 River Street
Milford, CT 06460

Testimony of
Benjamin Blake, Mayor
City of Milford

Public Health Committee

RE: HB 5542 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONNECTICUT EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES PRIMARY SERVICE AREA TASK FORCE; AND, **SB 439** – AN ACT CONCERNING RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

Thank you for this opportunity to **provide support** for these important proposals and to encourage you to adopt all of the recommendations of the EMS PSA Task Force, especially Recommendation #5.

In Milford, we are very proud of our ISO designated Class 1 Fire Department, a designation awarded to less than one tenth of one percent of Fire Departments in the country based on the quality of the town's Fire Suppression Services. While fire suppression has traditionally been the chief function of firefighters, over the last several decades, municipal fire service - Milford's in particular - has expanded its public safety role and shifted its focus over to Emergency Medical Services.

The taxpayers of Milford have made huge investments to ensure that, in addition to our Class 1 Fire Suppression Services, our Emergency Medical Services are also among the finest in the nation. To provide these excellent Fire/Rescue services, Milford spends upwards of $15 million dollars each year from our operating budget and millions more in annual capital investments. We employ 111 EMT's, 26 of whom are also licensed Paramedics who provide the highest levels of patient care. Our medical first responders operate out of paramedic engine companies and 3 licensed City ambulances, which are strategically positioned across Milford to ensure time-critical response. In fact, this past year, we constructed a brand new, $5 million station to further improve response time and to make certain that our assets are best positioned geographically.

In Milford, our Fire/Rescue Department meets or exceeds the high standards established by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). These NFPA standards insist that First Responders, or a higher level capability, arrive in 4 minutes or less to an Emergency Medical Incident, and 8 minutes or less when

203-783-3201 www.ci.milford.ct.us Fax 203-783-3329
e-mail mayor@ci.milford.ct.us

responding to a call for Advanced Life Support. Milford's impressive response times plainly demonstrate that our public safety investments have produced life-saving results.

At the same time, Milford's PSA responder does not appear to share the same fidelity to the NFPA standards, nor has it made the same investments to achieve levels of service similar to Milford's Fire/Rescue.

As brief background, the City of Milford's most recent written contract with our commercial ambulance service expired on November 30, 2011. Since then, we have made numerous efforts to negotiate a new agreement without ANY good faith response. Our letters sent by regular and certified US Post outlining the City's proposed contract changes have gone unanswered, and yet, the lack of response is deafening. In my opinion, for-profit PSA responders are clinging to the status quo where accountability is virtually non-existent and where profit trumps public safety.

Quite frankly, the City of Milford needs our PSA provider to commit, in writing, to faster response times and to then honor those commitments. We want ambulances at the scene within 6 minutes for Priority 1 calls and 10 minutes for Priority 2 calls. Under the terms of Milford's expired written agreement for which we continue to operate, our PSA responder must merely arrive within 10 minutes for 90 percent of all requested Priority 1 calls, and within 15 minutes for 90 percent of all requested Priority 2 calls. Even under these outdated response standards, it is unclear whether our commercial ambulance service is actually meeting these minimum requirements.

Notwithstanding an obligation to provide the City with a monthly summary documenting late responses and the basis for the same, our PSA responder has failed to make available the mandatory summaries. Indeed, the last summary received by the City was from August 2013, wherein 25 late responses were identified for that month. Clearly, the present breakdown in communication is troubling, but what is even more concerning is the City's limited recourse under the existing law that allows an organization such exclusive, unchecked rights.

As Mayor, my highest duty of loyalty is to the safety and well-being of the residents of Milford. I'm not sure if the same can be said about for-profit companies headquartered outside the State of Connecticut, whose fiduciary duty centers around the wallets of investors.

On behalf of the City of Milford and the safety of its residents, I respectfully urge you to bust the existing monopolies and give towns more control over their PSA.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters.