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Sen. Bye, Rep. Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee

I'm writing expressing support and to ensure funding for the five regional EMS coordinators. These positions are not only crucial for driving the EMS profession forward, but the coordination and seamless flow that exists today would grind to a halt if their positions didn't exist. Currently the positions are classified as "dual-year" and not temporary. I would ask that the Committee and Legislature make these positions "permanent" in a budget implementer bill.

While the positions are within OEMS, under the current biannual budget the salaries are funded through the State Tobacco and Health Trust Fund. Under the Governor's Proposed budget, they will be funded through the General Fund.

I want to first say that as a former member of the Wolcott Town Council, I can appreciate and share no envy for the difficult decisions you will need to make in this year's budget. I understand that you evaluate every program in state government to ensure they are necessary and carry the best value for tax payers.

These coordinators are part of the front-line responder system. They have extensive training with FEMA and incident management, and in recent years during Hurricane Sandy, the Blizzard of 2013, and this year's blizzards have drafted emergency executive orders approved by the Governor to ensure that the lifeline you depend upon when you can't leave your home during blizzards and disasters still runs safely and efficiently during times of blizzards and disaster when no other health entity would operate.

These Executive Orders – which allowed for patients to be transported by vehicles other than licensed ambulances in trying conditions, as well as alternate destinations other than hospitals has been met with broad support - and welcome as surprisingly responsive measures we have not seen in many years.

Coordinators perform training and evaluation roles, plan for pre-positioning of standby equipment such as radiation dosimeters and the State's Field Hospital at major events such as OpSail in New London, and have staffed the State's Emergency Management Center during major storms and incidents.

These five coordinators are the public face and troubleshooting liaisons between 24,000 EMS workers and our State Government. The EMS system is complex and often misunderstood by the public with its very diverse complement of over 401 entities as licensed and participating stakeholders statewide. These include volunteer non-profit services, commercial for-profit services, municipal services, fire department sponsor services, youth Explorer groups and State based EMS services. There are 168 certified transport organizations, 22 commercial companies, 117 first responder agencies

(mostly police and fire departments), and 94 supplemental first responder agencies (police, fire, and perhaps security and other groups). This constitutes a total of 401 different agencies that need to be integrated in a coordinated response structure locally and statewide. As you can imagine, there are sometimes competing interests. It is these Five Regional Coordinators that are the primary consensus builders.

The resumes of coordinators are broad. Before taking on the Coordinator positions, they started as volunteer or commercial EMT's, trainers, and front line providers themselves. Their selection is screened by the EMS agencies within their coordinating region - ensuring the right candidate meets the region's needs for services.

They work on several committees and undertake research and drafting roles to further the relatively young EMS profession to streamline standards across disparate groups that sometimes disagree among each other. They are working closer to streamline standard of care across the state in a protocol system that currently is fragmented.

I can tell you that working as an EMS professional in Connecticut presents its challenges already. There are over one hundred EMS agencies along with another couple hundred auxiliary police and fire agencies that we work alongside. Without these coordinators, our system would struggle.

Through my interactions with them, I believe these five Regional Coordinators are some of the hardest, most knowledgeable workers in state government (next to the legislative staff, of course). I have called upon them myself and have heard other EMS providers being equally impressed with how quickly they resolve questions and cut through red tape. For example, two years ago I had paid the \$150 fee for my paramedic license- but had not received my new license close to the date of my renewal. The expiration date would have taken place on a weekend, followed by a New Year's Holiday. Without a renewal, I would have missed several days of work if I didn't get a prompt answer. Several calls to OEMS went unanswered. Finally, a co-worker suggested I contact Region 5 coordinator Jean Speck. I did so doubtful that a state employee would answer the phone at 4:50 pm. She did, and assured me the next day that my license renewal had been processed before the expiration and explained the delay.

Please ensure that these five positions are fully funded. As one budget hawk to another - I can assure the taxpayer that they exemplify the responsive and proactive service we expect for our tax dollars.

Thank you for your Consideration.

Suggested Draft Language – EMS Coordinator Positions

Sec. 19a-186a. Regional emergency medical services coordinators. Employment with Department of Public Health. Any individual employed on June 30, 2010, as a regional emergency medical services coordinator or as an assistant regional emergency medical services coordinator shall be offered [an unclassified durational] a permanent position within the Department of Public Health [for the period from July 1, 2010, to June 30, 2011, inclusive,] provided no more than five [unclassified durational] such positions shall be created. [Within available appropriations, such unclassified durational positions may be extended beyond June 30, 2011.] The Commissioner of Administrative Services shall establish job classifications and salaries for such positions in accordance with the provisions of section 4-40. [Any such created positions shall be exempt from collective bargaining

requirements and no individual appointed to such position shall have reemployment or any other rights that may have been extended to unclassified employees under a State Employees' Bargaining Agent Coalition agreement.] Individuals employed in such [unclassified durational] positions shall be located at the offices of the Department of Public Health. In no event shall an individual employed in [an unclassified durational] such a position pursuant to this section receive credit for any purpose for services performed prior to July 1, 2010.