

Testimony of Gregory B. Allard,
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Transportation

Monday, February 13, 2019

Senator Leone, Representative Lemar, Senator Martin, Representative Devlin and other distinguished members of the Transportation Committee:

My name is Greg Allard, I have been part of the CT Emergency Medical Services system for 27 years. I am a licensed Paramedic, however, my current roles in EMS are more administrative than the street.

My testimony today is in **strong opposition to *Raised Bill No. 66, An Act Concerning the Non-Emergency Transportation of Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities Confined to a Stretcher***

This bill presents concerns on several fronts. The ones I will present in my testimony today are related to transportation and patient safety. However, that does not take away from the importance of the potential financial implications to the patients and the state Medicaid system that introducing stretcher vans would have on the non-emergency medical transportation system.

All of what is being asked in this proposed language is already done in an ambulance by trained emergency medical personnel. I question the need to create a whole new level of transportation provided by services offering "equivalents", when the reality is there is not an equivalent to a trained and certified healthcare professional especially when it comes to the well-being of our most vulnerable citizens.

I understand the thought behind this legislation to try to serve people that require a stretcher but are not considered patients. However, that is in itself a misnomer as being confined to a stretcher, by its very nature, means there is an underlying medical condition. We understand that sometimes those individuals do need to attend to funerals, weddings, or other important life events. I am proud of the ambulance service I work for, American Ambulance, where we transport to funerals and weddings when requested free of charge. These happen maybe a handful of times per year.

My counterparts in like services also cover similar trips. My service goes beyond this by working with our local Hospice Provider and offering a program Sentimental Journeys. These Journeys are done for FREE and are typically four-hour excursions requiring all kinds of logistical arrangements. It is not a common occurrence for a place of business to have a person on a stretcher roll in. It is important to note that these services are offered with medically trained professionals.

Proponents of the legislation have said such services are not being provided but that is not true. It has also been stated in the past that this would be done infrequently. However, if individuals are not using the specialized stretcher equipment with great frequency it raises significant safety concerns. I appreciate the attempt to offer medical protections to the bill but there really is no substitute for trained professionals who utilize stretchers on a daily basis and whose job it is to monitor patient health and safety.

Beyond the patient safety, which is the paramount concern, there are payment issues the committee should consider before moving forward. There is a real possibility that adding a new mode of transportation could impact the Medicare coverage of certain ambulance trips and either shift the cost to Medicaid or directly to the patient for these trips and others that are already being provided by an ambulance.

It is for these reasons that I oppose Senate Bill 66 and would ask the committee take no further action in allowing for any of the suggested language changes as it relates to stretcher vans.

I am available to discuss my EMS service at greater length and answer any questions you may have.
Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory B. Allard
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