

# Public Safety and Security Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5479  
AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF ADVANCED LIFE SUPPORT  
**Title:** SERVICES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT CAMPUS IN STORRS.  
**Vote Date:** 3/19/2024  
**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute  
**PH Date:** 3/12/2024  
**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Public Safety and Security Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill is requiring the University of Connecticut fire department to be designated as the primary service area (PSA) responder for ALS services on the university's campus in Storrs if the department satisfies the minimum qualification for the provision of such services.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

**William Perez, Chief – UConn Fire Department:** Testified via correspondence on this bill. He testified that the University is currently in discussion with Hartford Health Care and Windham Hospital leadership to explore opportunities to work collaboratively to provide the highest quality of coordinated care between our organizations and to ensure the best care to the UConn community. The University/UCFD would like to continue these discussions before pursuing efforts around Primary Service Area (PSA) designation. And are hoping that these ongoing discussions will lead to a mutual agreement to provide supplemental service that will benefit the students and the university community.

### NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

**Peter Buonome, Vice President – CT Fire Department Instructors:** Testified via correspondence in support of this bill. He testified that having established a highly successful Regional Fire Dept. ALS service at Bradley International Airport during his 12 years a chief and union negotiator back from 1981 through his retirement in 1994, the proof is in the

pudding, that the Bradley medics were responsible for saving hundreds of lives during those years.

He stated that the obvious that the receiving hospital would still be Windham Hospital and that the current paramedic service will still service the University of Connecticut even though the P.S.A. is retained by the University of Connecticut through its Fire and EMS Services. Critically to note is that UConn EMS will respond on an average of 3 minutes versus and Paramedic at Windham Hospital Paramedic Services the average of 13-minute response for life threatening emergencies and the bottom line for the Public Safety Committee is "patient first."

**Frank Duncan, Firefighter/Paramedic – UConn Fire Department:** Testified in support of this bill via correspondence. He testified that he is one of the recently hired firefighter/paramedics at UCFS who is only allowed to work at the basic life support (BLS) capacity and not the advance life support (ALS) trained level when on shift at Storrs main campus. With the increase in call volume region-wide, we must wait for the available ALS provider while delaying advanced patient care.

With respect to our current ALS providers, their resources are often stretched across the region during busier call times. As first responders, we are taught to work to the best of our ability to help people in need, however with a limit on this ability, it goes against what has been taught and what we were sworn to do.

He believes that in supporting this bill it means the committee is in support of quicker response times and immediate ALS care to patients in need.

**Joe Speich:** Testified via correspondence in support of this bill. He testified as a paramedic of 18 years and that this bill allows the University of Conn to control and operate its own paramedic service. The increasing call volume has led to increased response times and unavailability and delay in ALS to the students, employees and visitors of the University. ALS includes cardiac monitoring, medication administration and airway management. UConn already operates paramedic services at its Farmington Campus with success and it would be an easy transition for the Storrs campus.

**Peter Brown, President- UPPFA of CT:** He testified via correspondence in support of this bill. Currently, the UConn firefighters assigned to protect the Storrs campus are well trained and provide a high level of service to the students, faculty, employees, and residents of Storrs and the surrounding areas. These firefighters are all trained to a minimum level of EMT, but many have the more advanced level of Paramedic, which allows them to treat patients up to the ALS level. They are unable to provide these services or transport patients directly from campus. Instead, firefighters can attempt to stabilize patients while they wait for a paramedic ambulance from Windham Hospital which is over 10 minutes or more away. This puts the students and other residents in a difficult situation which could further complicate their emergency or put their lives in serious peril. The firefighters have the equipment and training to provide these services immediately. By giving the UConn firefighters the transport designation for the Storrs campus, the people this flagship university will be much safer.

**Dan Starvish, President IAFF Local S 15-CT Police and Fire Union:** Testified via correspondence in support of this bill. He testified that the availability of more operational paramedic staffed ALS service units benefits everyone. The students, staff and visitors of UConn will immediately benefit, as will the surrounding towns via the availability of other

agencies services more often, and with less delays. When paramedic service is unavailable due to other emergencies, UConn Storrs will be able to handle its own emergencies completely, without needing to commit the Windham Hospital paramedic to emergencies at UConn Storrs. This bill would allow those UConn paramedics to perform their life saving care immediately, and eliminate a duplication of resources, which limits the number of paramedics available regionwide.

He continued his testimony stating that, UConn Storrs as a campus during the school session and sporting events, has a population approaching 40,000 people, which puts it on par with being a top 25 town in Connecticut population wise. All towns of this population size in Connecticut have full control of their boundaries PSA, and all have their own dedicated advanced life support services.

**Anonymous:** Testified in support of this bill via correspondence. Anonymous testified that UConn should be afforded the opportunity to hold the PSA rights to ALS on the Storrs campus. This is not a new program but a program expansion. The department has the training, equipment, and personnel to handle these calls. Windham Hospital provides the paramedic service to 13 towns, well over 170 square miles and at times only has two paramedics covering this entire distance and it is criminal to not allow UConn to utilize their staff on ALS calls, especially when they already have everything necessary. Additionally, by implementing an ALS service, it will allow the Windham medics to be available for the other citizens of the many towns Windham services. Too often it occurs that there is no paramedic available, and UConn must utilize another service such as ASM or Rockville which is at minimum, 2-3 towns away. Windham is often well over 10 minutes from the time they are notified. UConn has its own dispatch center so frequently, there is a lag time between initial dispatch and requesting a paramedic due to the two dispatch centers having to communicate. This can add a couple minutes where seconds matter. Usually, Windham is just being dispatched as UConn units are arriving on scene. Lastly, there are numerous ALS call types that other services dispatch paramedics to that Windham hospital, does not respond to.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Gregory Allard, Director of EMS Affairs – Hartford Healthcare EMS Network:** Testified via correspondence in opposition of this bill. He testified that since 1995 Windham Hospital Paramedics have consistently demonstrated their commitment to delivering high quality care to the community including UCONN. He also indicated that there is already a process in place that the Dept, of Public Health OEMS oversees as it relates to Primary Service Area Responder assignments and the introduction of this bill usurps that process. He concluded by stating that Hartford Healthcare and its EMS network and Windham Hospital Paramedic will continue to collaborate with the community, leadership at UCONN and the FD.

**Anonymous:** Testified in opposition of this bill via correspondence. Anonymous testified that DPH-OEMS has a process in place relating to Primary Service Area Responder Assignments and this bill would set precedence if acted upon favorably allowing other services to have their own bills drafted to avoid an established process. Also, UCONN FD was denied twice for the same request previously.

**Christopher Colonair, President – Windham Hospital United Employees, Local 5099:** Testified via correspondence in opposition of this bill. He testified that this bill is in direct

opposition to the process already in place under State Law, the language proposed is not in the appropriate avenue for the desired change. He also testified that expansion of the service of the UConn FD will not substantially improve delivery of EMS to the region and may destabilize it instead. Their medical control is based over 30 miles away from Windham Hospital and cannot adequately and comprehensively monitor their day-to-day operations, thus they cannot replicate the level of service currently provided to the region.

**Reported by: Michelle Adams**

**Date: 3/27/2024**