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March 13, 2019

RE: Support for Telephone CPR (HF1520)

Chair Mariani and Members of the Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Finance and Policy Division:

The organizations listed above write in support of HF1520, which would strengthen our emergency response system by promoting telephone CPR training for 911 telecommunicators.

Throughout Minnesota, 911 telecommunicators are the gateway to our emergency response system. They are the first point of contact in an emergency, and they have the unique opportunity to help callers while they wait for first responders to arrive. When trained in telephone CPR, they can coach callers with real-time, step-by-step instructions, enabling callers to become lifesavers.

Minnesota has 102 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs), the place your call gets routed when you dial 911. Training varies from PSAP to PSAP, as does their ability to coach callers through how to perform CPR. Some PSAPs provide this instruction while others do not. The goal of HF1520 is to ensure all callers are provided with this important instruction, either through the local PSAP where the call is first routed or by transferring the caller to another PSAP whose staff are trained and willing to provide it.

Cardiac arrest is a leading cause of death, with more than 350,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occurring each year in the United States. It strikes suddenly and without warning, and what happens in the first few minutes can mean the difference between life and death. Every minute that passes without CPR, survival decreases 7-10%. With EMS response times exceeding 10 minutes in many areas in Minnesota, the need for CPR to be started quickly by a bystander is great.

Telephone CPR can significantly increase bystander CPR rates and cardiac arrest survival. Real experiences show that even trained bystanders may need coaching during the difficult and often emotionally stressful experience of witnessing a cardiac arrest. For those without previous CPR knowledge, confident coaching from a telecommunicator trained in telephone CPR can give them the instruction they need to act quickly.

Telephone CPR is an effective strategy to improve cardiac arrest survival, yet it is underutilized in Minnesota. More comprehensive implementation of CPR prearrival instructions has the potential to save dozens of lives in Minnesota each year. We ask you to support HF1520, ensuring all 911 telecommunicators are trained to provide this lifesaving instruction or to quickly transfer cardiac arrest calls to another PSAP that can.