



April 3, 2024

Re: Support for H.F. 3992 (Lislegard) – One-time Aid for Ambulance Services

Dear Representative Gomez and members of the House Taxes Committee,

Created in 1994, the MRHA has grown to be a recognized advocate for rural health in Minnesota. Our mission is to strengthen health care for rural Minnesotans. On behalf of our nearly 200 members, we share our support for the EMS system that serves rural Minnesota.

I am writing today in support of H.F. 3992 (Lislegard) which would provide one-time funding for struggling rural ambulance services.

As the Legislative Task Force traveled across rural Minnesota, a common discussion took place around the need for funding. During the field hearings, ambulance operators shared annual losses of \$300k, \$180k, and \$1.1 million. These losses are real and are being absorbed by cities, hospitals, and private providers. We trust you are as concerned as we are about how long these municipalities and organizations can continue to operate in the red.

The funding crisis we face today has been long coming. Over the past 20 years, reimbursements from Medicare and Medicaid have been flat while the cost to operate ambulance services have increased. The workforce shortage we are experiencing is a direct effect of this inadequate funding and reimbursement. Ambulance operators cannot afford to pay their staff wages that compete with most other jobs in their communities. Not to mention the \$60+ million volunteer subsidy that has kept many rural ambulance services financially viable. If there are no people to do the work, there are no ambulances to respond. The time is now to focus on funding. Innovation and transformation will surely follow.

Once again, we appreciate the opportunity to share the importance of funding initiatives to support the sustainability of our rural ambulance industry. If you have any questions regarding MRHA's position, feel free to contact me at mark@mnruralhealth.org or 218-201-0098.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Jones', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Jones
Executive Director