



March 15, 2023

Representative Tina Liebling
Chair, Human Services Finance Committee
379 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support for Rural EMS in Minnesota

Dear Chair Liebling and committee members,

Created in 1994, the MRHA has grown to be a recognized advocate for rural health in Minnesota. Our mission is to improve health care for rural Minnesotans through education, advocacy, and by fostering cooperative partnerships.

As you may know, Minnesota EMS and ambulance services are facing significant challenges. Among them are a funding system that doesn't fully account for actual costs and severe workforce shortages.

I am writing today to encourage the Committee to focus on solving the critical funding and workforce issues faced by Minnesota's rural EMS providers.

In the 1980s, the federal government began decreasing financial support for ambulance services, leaving local services with little state or local governmental support. Over the past four decades, the decreasing funding along with below-cost government reimbursement has put extreme stress on rural ambulance providers. Many rural ambulance providers utilize volunteers to subsidize the staffing of their ambulances. However, the number of people able to volunteer for their local ambulance service along with the competitive labor market in rural communities has pushed rural EMS to a new level of crisis.

Several bills have been introduced to support the emergency medical services system in Minnesota (**HF 165/SF 1594, HF 193/SF 471, HF 643/SF 595, HF 2146/, HF 141/SF 150, HF 449/SF 2821**). These bills aim to ease these challenges. I ask that you support the ambulance industry by supporting these bills and rejecting moves that would not solve the real problems facing EMS such as HF 2736 and SF 2691 that dismantle our State's Primary Service Area Law.

Once again, we appreciate the opportunity to share the importance of workforce and funding initiatives to support the sustainability of our rural EMS 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', is written over a white background.

Mark Jones
Executive Director