

Wisconsin EMS Association

Serving Those Who Serve Others



To: Representative Todd Novak, Chair
Members of the Assembly Committee on Local Government

From: Alan DeYoung, Executive Director

Date: Thursday, May 4, 2023

RE: Assembly Bill 245 re: Local Government Funding

Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Local Government:

On behalf of the Wisconsin Emergency Medical Services Association (WEMSA) and the first responders and departments that we represent, we are submitting the following testimony in support of provisions contained in Assembly Bill 245 and the corresponding co-sponsorship memo summary that details the levels of funding to be included in the state budget. Our association represents half of all active EMS providers and their departments in Wisconsin, over 7,000 EMS providers and over 350 EMS departments, both urban and rural.

WEMSA supports proposals and efforts to increase funding to help stabilize Wisconsin's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system. Which is why our association is supporting the bill, specifically on the policy items contained in Assembly Bill 245 and fiscal initiatives outlined in the corresponding co-sponsorship memo - in relation to the new aid funding for local governments, "Maintenance of Effort" provisions for EMS, the proposed \$25 million annual base appropriation (increased from \$2.2 million) and expanded uses of the Funding Assistance Program (FAP).

For many years, EMS in Wisconsin has faced the challenges of underfunding and inadequate resources, often relying on volunteers to provide critical 9-1-1 emergency medical response services. The proposed increase in the Funding Assistance Program (FAP) to \$25 million per year from its current \$2.2 million, as well as the expansion of the program to include non-transport (EMR) departments, represents an important first steps toward addressing the financial needs of EMS providers across the state.

Additionally, we ask the committee to consider that the Maintenance of Effort provision be revised to require compliance with three out of the four statements, rather than the current two out of four. We believe this adjustment will further strengthen the commitment to EMS and help ensure a more robust and sustainable system.

Overall, we commend any proposals that increase or create new aid funding for local EMS. To that end, any ability to provide additional funding to build upon this for emergency medical services would assist in further stabilizing local services and with the recruitment and retention crisis facing EMS.

It is important for policymakers to recognize that EMS providers are already extremely efficient - operating on tight budgets, with costs frequently being subsidized by volunteer efforts. What state staffing positions or programs rely on volunteers, such as the nearly 80 percent of Wisconsin's EMS systems do? What other programs rely on local fundraising events to supplement local EMS budgets? Further, studies conducted by the Wisconsin Policy Forum have demonstrated that consolidating EMS services may not lead to immediate cost savings.

In conclusion, we believe that the Assembly Bill 245 provisions relating to funding for public safety and maintenance of effort - and the corresponding co-sponsorship memo outlining state budget funding appropriations represent an important step toward providing needed funding to help stabilize Emergency Medical Services in Wisconsin, ultimately ensuring the safety and well-being of our citizens. We encourage the Assembly Committee on Local Government to consider our recommendations and continue working towards a well-funded and fully-operating EMS system in the state.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan DeYoung', written in a cursive style.

Alan DeYoung, M.S.
Executive Director/ CEO
Wisconsin EMS Association

For statistical data and related information, please reach out to the Wisconsin EMS Association (WEMSA) at 414-431-8193 or wemsa@wisconsinems.com to get additional information.