



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee
April 7th, 2016
Richard Gibbons
Acting Deputy Secretary, Health Planning and Assessment
Director, Bureau of Emergency Medical Services

Chairmen Barrar and Sainato as well as all members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide remarks regarding HB 1113 and the Community Paramedicine process in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The concept of Community Paramedicine as a component of a Mobile Integrated Healthcare delivery to our citizens has been demonstrated both nationally and within our commonwealth to add value to the health of patients, as well as contribute to better outcomes and help reduce downstream costs in our overburdened health care system.

To date, “pilot” programs have been operating in the commonwealth in a variety of delivery models, each tailoring their programs to meet the diverse needs of the communities they serve. While there is and should be great diversity in the programs, they also share some commonalities.

Each of them has demonstrated the types of success I mentioned before. All of them have worked very hard to provide additional education to their employees while still making certain the EMS providers continued to function within their respective scopes of practice.

One of the most important commonalities between these pilot programs is this: none of the programs has sought to replace any other home care provider or agency. They have focused instead on two main gaps that exist in our healthcare delivery system: One, under-served populations such as those in rural areas, and two, patients within the system who often feel their only access to healthcare is to utilize the emergency services and emergency departments as their primary access to health care. These areas constitute some of the most expensive portions of our

healthcare system. Community Paramedicine programs not only reduce the costs associated with healthcare delivery to these populations, but they also provide better health outcomes to the individuals within them.

I will allow others who will be testifying before you today to provide details regarding the successes of these efforts and answer any operational questions you may have about the program.

In regards to the legislation, we are very appreciative the interest and willingness to help. The EMS community, the Department of Health and hopefully, the legislature all agree -- it is time to formalize the recognition of the Community Paramedicine practice, as well as establish minimum standards for education, scope of practice and other areas regulated for EMS providers.

As you are aware, our existing EMS System Act gives the Department the ability in §8113 (a)(8) to establish other classes of providers by regulation without additional legislation. We have asked the Pennsylvania Emergency Health Services Council (PEHSC), our advisory body, to begin working with us to establish those regulations.

That is not to say we are opposed to additional legislation regarding Community Paramedicine. If the legislature feels strongly about continuing with legislation, we would have a few suggestions:

- Any legislation should amend the existing EMS System Act rather than adding a separate act. This enables us to better manage the system and maintain consistency.

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- The Department of Health would welcome the opportunity to work with the legislature to help draft the language for the amendment so that it remains consistent with the existing EMS System Act and regulations.
- Legislation should, if developed, outline clear standards for background checks and criminal history requirements. Given the expanded access these providers will gain into patients and family lives, the requirements should be commensurate with other professions who share similar access and responsibilities.

We thank you again for your interest in our emergency medical services system and this new level of service for our communities. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Neil Malady in the Office of Legislative Affairs at (717) 783-3985.

Respectfully submitted,

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