



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

FISCAL NOTE

HOUSE BILL NO. 1877

PRINTERS NO. 3321

PRIME SPONSOR: Barrar

COST / (SAVINGS)

FUND	FY 2015/16	FY 2016/17
General Fund; Property Tax Relief Fund; State Gaming Fund	\$0	\$0

SUMMARY: House Bill 1877, Printer's Number 3321, reauthorizes and makes several changes to the Volunteer Fire and Emergency Medical Services grant program.

ANALYSIS: This legislation amends Chapter 78 of Title 35 (Health and Safety) to extend the expiration date of the grant program. The authority of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and State Fire Commissioner to award grant funding is extended four years from June 30, 2016 to June 30, 2020.

The bill makes several program changes related to definitions, agency authority, grant eligibility and administrative duties. For example, the definition of "career emergency medical services" organizations is added as an eligible recipient to the grant program if it is designated as a municipality's primary EMS provider. It specifically excludes those organizations "intended for the routine transport of individuals who are convalescent or nonambulatory and do not ordinarily require emergency medical treatment while in transit." It also extends the grant program to volunteer EMS agencies that are designated as a municipality's primary service.

The State Fire Commissioner is authorized to establish additional authorized uses of grant funds paid. The bill also specifies that each fire company with not more than 20 members who are certified as Fire Fighter 1 level may be eligible to receive additional grants under a certification bonus point system administered by the commissioner. Firefighters will have been certified by the National Professional Qualification Board or by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress and verified by the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy.

The bill makes additional changes related to eligibility for grant funding stating that a fire company must have actively responded to at least 10 fire or rescue emergencies during the previous calendar year. It also requires active reporting in the Pennsylvania Fire Information Reporting System to receive grant funding. The commissioner shall also develop and publish guidelines specifying the criteria necessary to determine the level of participation.

The bill also amends Section 7833 permitting the allocation of appropriated funds to revise the amount of administrative funding to be used by the State Fire Commissioner. The bill states

that the commissioner may use not more than \$800,000 of any unencumbered monies remaining to cover the administrative costs of implementing the grant program.

This legislation shall take effect immediately upon enactment.

FISCAL IMPACT: Enactment of this bill will have no fiscal impact on Commonwealth funds.

The Volunteer Fire and Emergency Medical Services grant program is reauthorized to continue as established under Chapter 78 for an additional four years until June 30, 2020. No changes are made to the program's funding amount, which receives \$30 million in total program funding with \$25 million from the State Gaming Fund and \$5 million from the Property Tax Relief Fund.

The bill proposes to add "career emergency medical services" (EMS) organizations as eligible applicants for the program, which could change the amount of grant funding an applicant receives if the number of applicants increases. However, this is not expected to adversely impact the program because it is reported that few of these career EMS organizations would be eligible; applicants must be designated as a municipality's primary EMS provider as required by the legislation and most career EMS organizations are not.

The bill also authorizes the potential for additional grant money to be available to each fire company with not more than 20 members certified as Fire Fighter 1 level. Future grant amounts and eligibility would then be determined by certification bonus point system as administered and determined by the commissioner.

Additional administrative costs and duties of the State Fire Commissioner to administer the program as outlined in the bill would be covered under existing operations. For example, the bill authorizes the use of up to \$800,000 of unencumbered funds remaining in program after grant disbursements are executed. Unencumbered funds remain available for this and other similar grant programs when applicants fail to submit grant agreements in a timely manner. This would then authorize the commissioner to use these available funds to cover program administrative costs.

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House Appropriations Committee (R)

DATE: June 29, 2016

Estimates are calculated using the best information available. Actual costs and revenue impact incurred may vary from estimates.