

**SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
FISCAL NOTE**

BILL NO. House Bill 1877

PRINTER NO. 3321

AMOUNT

No Fiscal Impact
\$5 million
\$25 million

FUND

General Fund
Property Tax Relief Fund
State Gaming Fund

DATE INTRODUCED

March 10, 2016

PRIME SPONSOR

Representative Barrar

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE OF BILL

House Bill 1877 amends Chapter 78 of Title 35 (Health and Safety) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes by reauthorizing the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Grant program for four years.

The legislation provides for numerous changes to the grant program, including defining and adding "career emergency medical services companies" to the program. The bill authorizes the State Fire Commissioner to issue rules and guidelines for paid municipal fire departments for acceptable use of grant funds.

The bill provides additional funding to be available to fire companies under a bonus point system that is based on members who are certified by the National Professional Qualifications Board or the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress at a minimum level of Fire Fighter 1 on or before July 1st of the year of the grant application. The bill allows merged volunteer fire companies to continue to receive a larger grant for ten years.

The legislation requires fire companies to respond to at least ten fire or rescue emergencies in the prior year and actively participate in the Pennsylvania Fire Information Reporting System. The Fire Commissioner is required to develop and publish guidelines specifying the criteria necessary to determine the level of participation in the reporting system to remain eligible for grant funds.

The Fire Commissioner is permitted to utilize up to \$800,000 of any unencumbered funds for administration of the grant program.

The grant program is extended until June 30, 2020.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Enactment of this legislation will have no fiscal impact on Commonwealth funds.

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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. The program receives \$30 million in total 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 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 the program after grants are disbursed. Unencumbered funds remain available for this and other similar grant programs when applicants fail to submit grant agreements in a timely manner. This legislation would then authorize the Fire Commissioner to use these available funds to cover program administrative costs.