

# SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

**BILL NO.** Senate Bill 910

**PRINTER NO.** 1289

**AMOUNT**

No Fiscal Impact

See Fiscal Impact

**FUND**

General Fund

Volunteer Companies Loan Fund

**DATE INTRODUCED**

October 22, 2019

**PRIME SPONSOR**

Senator Mastriano

**DESCRIPTION**

Senate Bill 910 amends Title 35 to provide for the reauthorization of the Fire and EMS Grant Program and make other changes recommended by the Senate Resolution 6 Commission.

This bill changes the definitions of “EMS company” and “fire company” and adds the definition of “quick response services company”.

The legislation makes it the responsibility of the Office of the State Fire Commissioner (office) to administer the fire and EMS grant program. It expands the use of funds to include recruitment and retention program and volunteer firefighter length of service award programs. Eligible companies must have responded to at least 15 emergencies in the previous calendar year.

The consolidation incentive that is currently available to volunteer fire companies who have received loans from the Volunteer Companies Loan Fund is extended to emergency medical services (EMS) companies. This would allow EMS companies that consolidate to reduce the interest rate payable from 2% to 1% for all outstanding principal balances owed to the Volunteer Companies Loan Fund.

Senate Bill 910 extends the authorization of the program to June 30, 2024. It also requires the office to prepare and submit an annual report that shall include but is not limited to the total number of applications and approved grants and an analysis of the grants by use, location, status as volunteer or career, and use to pay off loans under the PA Volunteer Loan Assistance Program.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Senate Bill 910 will have no fiscal impact on the Commonwealth General Fund. The costs of administering the program are currently incurred by Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA). Given that the Office of the State Fire Commissioner is a line item under PEMA, it will not require any additional funds to administer the program.

The consolidation incentive for emergency medical services companies will have a deminimis impact on the Volunteer Companies Loan Fund. This provision is already provided to fire companies and is anticipated to affect a small number of current and future loans to EMS companies.

## **SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE**

This legislation increases from 10 to 15 the number of emergencies that companies are required to respond to for participation in the fire and EMS grant program. According to response reports for calendar year 2019, 21 fire and EMS companies would not have received grant funding if this higher response threshold had been in place. There were also 21 additional fire and EMS companies that participated in more than 15 but less than 20 emergency calls, putting them at risk of not meeting the 15 response minimum in future years. Current statute caps grant awards for fire companies at \$15,000 and EMS companies at \$10,000. Assuming the same number of responses by companies in future years, the increase in the minimum threshold will result in 21 fewer companies participating in the program, along with a reduction in expenditures of \$315,000.