



*FAPP Local # 1
IUPA 22
AFL-CIO*

Fraternal Association of Professional Paramedics

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June 12, 2016

The Honorable Stephen E. Barrar
House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee
18 East Wing
P.O. Box 202160
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2160

On May 25th my organization was forwarded a letter along with two attached proposals asking for input from us on HB 194 and another, the Farry proposal, which is now titled HB 2148. After reading both, two letters were composed, one from my organization's President and one from the City's Public Safety Director. Both were forwarded to Chairman Barrar informing him and this committee of both the City of Pittsburgh Department of Public Safety's and the Paramedic Union's support of both proposals.

This weekend however, as we were researching online, we again came across HB 2148 which has seemingly changed between May 25th and June 9th to now exclude the language reading "emergency medical services personnel of cities" and has been replaced with "emergency medical services personnel employed within a city fire department" although the short title of the bill still remains the same. With this newfound information we simply cannot support this bill as it is currently written.

Without the knowledge of what catalyst sparked the change in language I cannot say what altered the opinion of this committee to exclude the men and women of EMS in our commonwealth. I can say however that in the House Co-Sponsorship Memorandum written by Representative Farry it is mentioned that his proposal would "simply add additional first responders to the Act who are not currently covered under the Act but perform in many cases the exact same duties as those who are currently covered." The memo goes on to read that "these responders were overlooked when the law was drafted." If this bill is passed as written that will once again be the case.



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I am currently in the midst of my tenth year of service as a Paramedic in the City of Pittsburgh Bureau of EMS, an agency which responds to well over 60,000 calls per year. I have responded to countless calls for assistance, I have had to carry an injured person hundreds of yards over rough terrain to the nearest emergency vehicle, I have responded to calls alongside the fire bureau for various hazardous materials incidents, car accidents and chemical spills. I have assisted in the rescues of victims of multiple structure fires. I have responded with the police bureau as a public safety diver and as a tactical paramedic many times. I have had to rescue people from hillsides and from each of our three rivers. I have had to stand guard as my coworkers were buried after long battles with cancer and short battles with heart disease. I have had to look into the eyes of an old woman and tell her that her husband of 50 plus years will never tell her "good morning" again and I have had to tell a young woman that her child of only 9 weeks will never learn to call her "mama." But, to be clear, this isn't about me; this is about the roughly 55,000 men and women of EMS in Pennsylvania whose contributions are evidently not nearly as valued as they should be by our leaders.

Since the late 1960's EMS has been an ever growing sector of public safety and whether an EMT or a Paramedic works for a fire department or a third party governmental service such as in Pittsburgh, they remain an integral part of the public safety system and respond to each and every type of call for assistance that any other agency responds to but for some reason, one that escapes my understanding, this bill intentionally neglects the risks that the selfless men and women of EMS expose themselves to on a daily basis; so that others may live. We should all take it upon ourselves to ensure that these public servants are given the recognition and benefits they deserve under this Act.

It is also well known that in Pennsylvania, as well as other states, recruitment of EMS providers is an issue. It is acts like these, where governments intentionally exclude EMS providers from gaining benefits afforded to other public servants, whom we know as our brothers and sisters, that feed into thoughts of resentment and plunder what morale remains when we know that all public servants should be viewed and treated as equals.

EMS providers in Pennsylvania, and everywhere else, have dedicated their lives to service and all EMT's and Paramedics strive to ensure the health and wellbeing of others no matter what the cost to themselves. In asking that you reconsider the intentional exclusion of "emergency medical services personnel of cities" from this Act, I am not asking this committee for any great additional offering. I am simply asking that this committee consider the health and wellbeing of our EMT's and Paramedics as important to you as we consider yours to us.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Justin Sypolt, BS, NRP
Recording Secretary
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