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Senator John Coghill

SPONSOR STATEMENT **SB 14 - Emergency Medical Services** **Version W**

Senate Bill 14 gives EMS agencies protections for peer review activities and adds a paramedic to the State Medical Board.

Peer review is an intensive self-evaluation process used within healthcare organizations in order to continuously monitor and improve patient care. Peer review activities are non-discoverable – this important protection is provided by states to healthcare organizations to establish an environment conducive to improvement, without fear of discovery and litigation.

SB 14 changes the definition of “review organization” to include EMS groups who perform quality improvement functions. By doing so, they are afforded the immunity and confidentiality protection that hospitals and other healthcare workers enjoy. Peer review protection is essential if Alaska’s EMS systems are to be used to their maximum potential.

The State Medical Board adopts regulations governing the practice of medicine in Alaska. It makes final licensing decisions and takes disciplinary action against physicians, physician assistants, and paramedics. The board’s membership is composed of five physicians, one physician assistant, and two public members. Paramedics have no representation on the board, despite being regulated by it for more than 30 years. SB 14 gives paramedics a voice on the board which will strengthen, enhance, and support the board’s decision-making on issues that fundamentally affect their profession.