

Testimony of Brian Webb on 17 February 2023 in the AK House Labor and Commerce Committee:

“Chairman Sumner and members of the Labor & Commerce committee, my name is Brian Webb. I’m from Anchorage, I represent myself today, as a veteran 45-year Alaska EMS provider, and thank you for the opportunity to speak.”

House Bill 57 seeks to correct EMS’s omission in the original Medical Quality Assurance statute. Alaska EMS is only asking that the legislature amend the statute to correct this inequity. Your EMS Services should be afforded the same quality assurance program protections that our fixed healthcare facilities in Alaska have enjoyed for so many years. We are not asking for anything unusual, as a number of other states have already enacted this very legislation, offering these QA protections to their EMS systems.

Alaska’s fragile EMS system continues to largely function via volunteerism. While many view this staffing method as just our ETTs, EMTs, and Paramedics, surprisingly, many of our rural and super rural EMS services also have volunteer medical directors, who, out of a sense of selfless service, step up so their community can have a state-certified EMS Service. These physicians are vital. For an EMS service to exist, it must have an Alaska-licensed medical director.

There’s two major points of our system’s frustration, and that is these physicians have all the Quality Assurance protections while working in their clinics, or critical access hospitals within their communities, yet when they don their EMS medical director’s hat in that very same community, they no longer have those protections. Secondly, and of equal concern, is that the EMS services themselves receive no protections in the current statute either. This should be alarming to us all.

And when our volunteer EMS medical directors learn of this inequity in their professional activities, they will often resign from EMS service. This issue seriously impacts the safety and health of our Alaska communities, as well as the very existence of our rural EMS services.

Alaska EMS is just asking for the legislature to help us provide the fix that the other states have already done for their EMS systems.

Mr. Chairman, and members of the Labor & Commerce Committee, thank you for your consideration of our proposed EMS legislation. That completes my testimony, and I’ll remain on the line should there be any questions or comments. Thank you for supporting Alaska EMS.