

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 1, 2024

3:30 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator David Wilson, Chair  
Senator James Kaufman, Vice Chair  
Senator Cathy Giessel

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Löki Tobin  
Senator Forrest Dunbar

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

EO 125 ELIMINATION OF THE ALASKA COUNCIL ON EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES.

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

HEIDI HEDBERG, Commissioner  
Department of Health (DOH)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-presented EO 125.

EUGENE WISEMAN, Emergency Programs Manager  
Division of Public Health  
Department of Health  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-presented EO 125.

ROBERTA LEICHTY, representing self  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of EO 125.

BRIAN WEBB, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of EO 125.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:30:39 PM](#)

CHAIR DAVID WILSON called the Senate Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Kaufman, Giessel, and Chair Wilson.

**EO 125 ELIMINATION OF THE ALASKA COUNCIL  
ON EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES.**

[3:31:17 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON announced the consideration of EO 125: Elimination of the Alaska Council on Emergency Medical Services.

[3:31:53 PM](#)

HEIDI HEDBERG, Commissioner, Department of Health (DOH), Juneau, Alaska, moved to slide 2 and said Executive Order (EO) 125 removes the Alaska Council on Emergency Medical Services (ACEMS) from Alaska Statute and transfers the responsibilities to the Department of Health. Transferring the responsibilities does not change the original intent. She stated that if EO 125 passes she intends to create an emergency medical services (EMS) advisory committee within the Department of Health (DOH). DOH did outreach to all ACEMS members and explained that having ACEMS in statute codifies specific seats. Removing ACEMS from statute would allow the DOH to create an EMS advisory committee that represents all disciplines of pre-hospital care.

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EUGENE WISEMAN, Emergency Programs Manager, Division of Public Health, Department of Health, Anchorage, Alaska, moved to slide 3 - 4 and spoke to the history of EMS in Alaska and why EO 125 is needed:

**Alaska Council on Emergency Medical Services**

- ACEMS was formed in 1977 when EMS was still emerging as a new industry
- The composition of ACEMS members is a reflection of their early formative years.

**Why is EO 125 needed?**

- Flexibility

- EMS has changed in the last 47 years
- Representation
  - ACEMS is codified in statute - moving to regs will allow other stakeholders a voice
- Partnership
  - Allow DOH to bring in subject matter experts partners
- Responsive
  - Advance the development of Alaska's EMS system in a more agile approach Partnership

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SENATOR GIESSEL stated that from 1974 - 1980 she was a critical care nurse in Anchorage. At that time, the medical director was beginning to offer education courses for firefighters on ambulances. Today, paramedic save rates in Anchorage are astonishing. She agreed that ACEMS has changed a lot in 47 years.

[3:38:10 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON asked if the intent is to maintain the council why not make statutory changes using the legislative process.

[3:38:34 PM](#)

MS. HEDBERG replied the legislature has many priorities and ACEMS has needed updating. Although EO 125 would remove ACEMS from statute, it is an efficient tool because DOH intends to keep ACEMS.

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CHAIR WILSON asked if the administration would object to writing a statute to create ACEMS within DOH after the implementation of EO 125. legislative process to create ACMES within DOH.

MS. HEDBERG replied no.

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CHAIR WILSON opened public testimony on EO 125.

[3:40:16 PM](#)

ROBERTA LEICHTY, representing self, Sitka, Alaska, testified in support of EO 125. She said she is the director for Southeast Region Emergency Medical Services in Sitka. There are seven EMS regions in Alaska. Each region has different challenges, assets, and solutions to problems. She stated she has been involved with EMS for 40 years. She suggested that passing EO 125 would bring about evolution for ACEMS, not elimination. She stated that

moving ACEMS under DOH would increase flexibility in appointing knowledgeable representatives. EO 125 poses flexibility for data collection, billing, and other seats. Currently, none of these seats are included because seats are assigned and limited by statute. She expressed hope that under DOH, ACEMS would include seats for subcommittee participation.

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BRIAN WEBB, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of EO 125. He said he has been involved with EMS since 1978. He opined that ACEMS replicates the work of other organizations and has outrun its relevance. Efficiency is good for Alaska which is why ACEMS should sunset through EO 125.

[3:45:00 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON closed public testimony on EO 125.

CHAIR WILSON asked for a quick update on moving EMS personnel under DOH.

[3:45:23 PM](#)

MR. WISEMAN replied that it has been two years since paramedics moved from the medical board to the State Office of Emergency Medical Services. The transition was essentially seamless. There is no longer a backlog for paramedic licensure. License processing takes about two weeks.

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MS. HEDBERG reiterated that EO 125 would create efficiency while maintaining the intent for creating ACEMS.

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SENATOR GIESSEL asked if there were any constitutional issues with EO 125.

CHAIR WILSON replied no.

SENATOR GIESSEL stated there is a transmittal document that is filled out after a hearing of an EO that should be signed by the committee.

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At ease

[3:47:38 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON reconvened the meeting and held EO 125 in committee.

3:48:24 PM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Wilson adjourned the Senate Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting at 3:48 p.m.