



OHIO TOWNSHIP ASSOCIATION

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Senate Highways & Transportation Committee Proponent Testimony Sub. HB 128 Ambulance Staffing June 8, 2011

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Heidi Fought and I am the Director of Governmental Affairs for the Ohio Township Association (OTA). On behalf of the OTA, thank you for the opportunity to express our support for Sub. HB 128, which revises the requirements for staffing ambulances.

Many citizens and organizations are calling on local governments to reduce costs and increase efficiencies. Townships are trying to be proactive but there are sections of the Ohio Revised Code that can be restrictive and prohibiting. For example, a township in NE Ohio that utilizes volunteers and part-time personnel researched the possibility of reducing response times and costs by partnering with neighboring townships for emergency runs. The plan was to have only one full-time person on call at a township at any given time, thus reducing personnel costs and response times.

Unfortunately, the current language in ORC §4765.43 prohibits this because a minimum of two responders must be in the ambulance for the emergency run if the organizations utilize volunteers less than 50 percent of the time. Even small to medium sized paid fire and EMS departments are having difficulty complying with this law, as often they have reduced staff levels during different parts of the day. The bill before you will help address their service needs and will provide small and medium paid departments maximum staffing flexibility.

Additionally, Sub. HB 128 changes the definition of volunteer units for the purposes of this section. Pursuant to Sub. HB 128 an EMS organization is defined as "substantially utilizing volunteers" if the organization has paid individuals, taken as a whole, that are scheduled for a total of not more than 192 hours in any week. This will certainly help townships that are utilizing both volunteer and paid part-time responders.

Substitute HB 128 also clarifies EMS contracting provisions for townships. Current law permits a township to contract with another entity for emergency services and permits a township to charge a fee for EMS runs within the township. The bill clarifies that a township may, within the scope of a contract with another entity, that the other entity may collect and retain any fee that the township may charge for EMS runs. This change is needed due to AG Opinion 2003-017, which opines any fee that is enacted by a township may be collected by a contracted provider but then shall be turned over to the township and deposited into a township fund. The township must then provide payment to the contracted provider for services rendered. The language in Sub. HB 128 simplifies this process.

The Ohio Township Association strongly supports Sub. HB 128 and we strongly encourage your favorable passage of this measure. I appreciate the opportunity to speak before you this afternoon. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.