

Mr. Chair and members of the committee thank you for this opportunity to speak to you regarding Senate Bill 1283. My name is Travis Myklebust, I am the fire chief in Lewiston, the current president of the Idaho Fire Chiefs Association and a second-generation volunteer EMT.

I am here today to speak to you in support of this legislation. The fire chiefs association has been working over the past 3 years on this concept, listening to our stakeholders, our members, and policy makers to come up with the legislation that is sitting in front of you today.

EMS in Idaho is struggling as outlined in numerous sections of the recent Volunteer Providers of EMS OPE report published in November of 2021. That report states that only 22% of EMS Directors reported that their agencies are adequately funded to meet the needs of their communities. I have seen this personally watching many smaller volunteer EMS agencies conduct fundraisers just to pay for their agency's insurance. 65% of the agencies reported delayed response times due to staffing issues and we all know in EMS that time means lives.

I was raised in a volunteer fire and EMS community; my father is now in his 51st year as a volunteer firefighter and was one of the original EMT's that created the QRU in Craigmont back in the early 70's. I have never forgotten where I came from and supporting our volunteer EMS providers is paramount for me.

This legislation will provide funding to our EMS transport providers that can be used to address the current pitfalls facing our EMS agencies today. These pitfalls include recruitment and retention of personnel, training of new and current responders, and updating of equipment. In the OPE report 88% of our EMS providers stated that that recruitment and retention will only get harder in the years to come. The cost of supplies and equipment have skyrocketed over the recent years and in my department, we have seen the cost of a defibrillator increase by 126% in less than 10 years.

This legislation will not add an additional burden to our property taxes, nor will it cost our state additional funding. The OPE report stated that "agencies are facing barriers to recouping their costs, especially in rural Idaho". The fire chiefs association sees this bill as a mechanism to help recoup some of those costs and improve EMS in Idaho while not adding undue hardship to the taxpayers of our great state. I recommend that you vote yes on senate bill 1283 and send this legislation to the floor for approval. I am happy to answer any questions you may have, and I would like to thank you for all you do for our state.