

SB 162 – Emergency Responders

Supporting Testimony

Thank you, Mr./Madam Chair. My name is _____ and I am here today in strong support of SB 162.

Mr./Madam Chair, our need for emergency first responders cannot be overstated. Every day in Michigan, someone gets into a car crash, a home starts to burn, or someone suffers from heat stroke or hypothermia. The physical and medical dangers to our citizens are constant and pervasive. It is estimated that Michigan's emergency responders receive 9,080,095 9-1-1 calls per year. However, there are only a few who are willing to serve in this capacity, and our force of emergency first responders is wearing thin.

According to an article by Bridge Michigan, our state has been experiencing a drastic overextension of its first responder workforce. In the Upper Peninsula six paramedics would normally be able to cover 1,500 square miles of territory, lately that number has been down to four. Imagine being paramedic who is already tasked with covering such a wide geographical area, and then knowing that you are operating at 2/3 of what you should be and that you have to help make up for the lost time? Yet the situation is not any better in southern Michigan. Cities like Jackson and Ann Arbor are recounted to have chronically slow response times, and rural areas in southern Michigan have to wait upwards of 30 minutes for emergency services to arrive when it would normally take 15-20 minutes. Southern Michigan has been consistently 85 first responders short. In 2022, Michigan needed to recruit and train 1,000 new first responders across the state.

This is largely because being an emergency responder is already a highly taxing job for those who bear it, and burnout is a frequent issue that we have seen developing across the entire profession. If we don't do something now to alleviate the pressure, we will continue in this downward spiral of emergency first responders being overloaded, burning out, and leaving the service. We need to provide more care for these brave men and women, and that means removing barriers to entry that would normally keep them from joining the service. A critical part of that is providing more job security for our part time and volunteer workers.

SB 162 would allow emergency first responders to respond to an emergency developing before a work shift without repercussions from an employer. This would mean that EMTs, Firefighters, etc. who work part-time or on a volunteer basis no longer need to fear that their additional job could be put on the line for responding to a crisis. They can rest assured knowing that they can care for both the community they serve and their own families.

Additionally, this bill allows for substantial protections for employers as well. Under this bill, an employee may not leave during a shift. This ensures that an employer may count on the work that is being done when an

employee is present. This bill also requires that the employee give notice to the employer about his/her status as an emergency first responder allowing the employer to anticipate potential absences. Finally, this bill does not require the employer to pay the employee for work missed during an emergency response situation, meaning that the financial loss faced by an employer is significantly mitigated. With all of this in mind, SB 162 is not only great for Michigan and its emergency responders, but it is very aware of the needs faced by employers as well

Mr./Madam Chair, this is a common sense bill to help ease the burden of so many people ready to help those in need. We need a strong first responder network, and that begins by removing barriers to entry for new recruits and additional stressors to an already exhausting profession. Let us help those who help us and vote yes on SB 162.

Thank you, and I will gladly take any questions at this time.

Articles

Andrea Flores (January 24, 2022). abc 13 On Your Side, *Michigan emergency medical services groups need roughly 1,000 new workers*. Retrieved from <https://www.wzzm13.com/article/news/local/ems-funding-staffing-shortage/69-5d740dc9-e479-4370-9bfb-2c3964b36023>.

Ted Roelofs (August 1, 2021). Bridge Michigan, *Michigan is burning through EMTs and paramedics, leaving shortages*. Retrieved from <https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-health-watch/michigan-burning-through-ems-and-paramedics-leaving-shortages?amp=>.

DaJzon Hughes (February 20, 2024). The Block, *Michigan Has America's 6th Highest 911 Call Rate*. Retrieved from <https://wbxxfm.com/michigan-americas-6th-highest-911-call-rate/>.