



State of Maryland

**Maryland
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January 24, 2022

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
Chairman
Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Letter of Information: SB 70–Emergency Medical System Plan – Guidelines for
Emergency Medical Services – Law Enforcement Canines

Dear Chairman Pinsky:

On behalf of the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS) and the State Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Board, I am writing to provide information the Committee may find helpful as it considers SB 70.

As you know, MIEMSS is an independent State agency responsible for coordinating Maryland's statewide EMS System. MIEMSS is governed by an 11-member State EMS Board appointed by the Governor. Among other things, The EMS Board is responsible for developing an EMS system plan for the State. See §§13-503 and 13-509, Education Art., MD Code Ann.

MIEMSS and the State EMS Board would like the Committee to be aware of the following as it considers SB 70.

Treatment of Injured Canines by EMS Clinicians. Treatment of animals requires a specialized subset of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Thus, there are medical doctors and there are veterinarians. There are approximately 19,000 EMS Clinicians who are licensed or certified in Maryland. An expectation that they treat injured canines would necessitate substantial training and additional equipment. This would be in addition to current requirements that are often felt to be arduous. The time necessary to complete education and training already presents a considerable limitation in recruiting qualified people to the field. Without significant funding from a central source, county and local EMS agencies, including volunteer companies, would bear the expense of further training and new equipment and supplies.

Ambulance Transport of Animals. There are no State prohibitions that forbid or limit EMS from transporting canines in ambulances. The determination of whether to transport an injured animal in an ambulance is a local decision that is made by local public safety personnel who respond to the scene of the incident. Ambulances are owned and controlled by the jurisdiction or fire department / rescue squad that operates them, and those entities determine how ambulances and other emergency vehicles are used. Decisions about deployment and use of jurisdictional public safety ambulances is a function that is appropriately placed at the county or local level, not at the State level. In addition, COVID

has had a far-reaching impact on all aspects of the healthcare system –including the EMS system. Many jurisdictions currently struggle with having sufficient personnel and ambulances to respond to 9-1-1 calls.

Immunity Protections. There already exist statutory protections from civil liability for members of a state, county, municipal fire department, ambulance, or rescue squad member, law enforcement officer and others when they provide aid, care and assistance to an animal at the site of an emergency and while in transit to a veterinary facility. See §5-614 Courts & Judicial Proceedings Art. (Chapter 411 of the 2017 Session (SB 269)).

The State EMS Plan. The State EMS Plan is a long-range, aspirational vision for Maryland’s statewide EMS System. The State EMS Plan lacks the legal authority to “authorize” actions by EMS personnel or to grant civil and criminal immunity. It provides strategic direction in 15 important areas, mirroring those areas addressed in national EMS planning and development efforts. Existing Maryland statutory requirements for the EMS Plan already include “...criteria and guidelines for the delivery of emergency medical services...” 13-509 (b)(ii). The most recent EMS Plan, “Vision 2030,” was updated and approved by the State EMS Board in 2020. See

<https://www.miemss.org/home/Portals/0/Docs/OtherPDFs/Vision-2030-Marylands-EMS-Plan-202010.pdf?ver=2020-11-09-163812-250>

SB 70 proposes to amend the current EMS-enabling statute that describes the State EMS Plan. The statute does not mention any single potential patient population (e.g., children). Subsequently, “canine” would be exclusively prioritized by mentioning it five (5) times in a law that codifies a system to care for the spectrum of ill and injured people.

I hope you and the Committee find this information helpful to your deliberations on SB 70. Please let me know if you have any questions or need any further information.

Sincerely,



Theodore R. Delbridge, MD, MPH
Executive Director

Cc: Members, Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee