



## State Senator Sheila Harsdorf

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Date: June 7, 2017

To: Senate Committee on Revenue, Financial Institutions and Rural Issues

From: Senator Sheila Harsdorf

RE: Senate Bill 239 relating to upgrading service levels for ambulances in rural areas

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Dear Chair Marklein and Committee Members:

Thank you for holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 239 (SB 239) which allows a rural ambulance service provider to upgrade its service levels to the highest level of license of any emergency medical technician staffing the ambulance.

Under current law, ambulances are licensed at either an EMT Basic or EMT Intermediate/Advanced level. If an ambulance is licensed at the EMT Intermediate/Advanced level, every ambulance leaving the station must have a least one EMT Intermediate/Advanced technician on board. Rural departments have difficulty upgrading to the advanced level due to not every EMT having the time or interest in attending training to obtain the advance license.

Additionally under current law, ambulance services can only provide services up to the level of their issued license irregardless of the license level of the individual EMT. This means, that if a volunteer EMT has advanced training, but is on a basic ambulance service, that EMT cannot use their training above the basic license of the ambulance service. SB 239 would allow the ambulance service to operate at the level of the highest trained EMT on board the ambulance without having to upgrade their service to 24/7. The service however can only advertise the level they are allowed to offer the public on a 24/7 basis.

I urge your support and prompt action for this legislation. Thank you and I would welcome the opportunity to answer questions.



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# JESSE KREMER

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 59<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

*Testimony before the Senate Committee on Revenue, Financial Institutions and Rural Issues  
State Representative Jesse Kremer  
June 7, 2017*

Good morning,

Thank you committee members, and especially you, Chairman Marklein, for holding a hearing on this bill within our "Rural Fire & EMS Reforms" package.

Although the 2016 Legislative Council Study Committee on Volunteer Firefighter and Emergency Medical Technician Shortages convened for a variety of legislator concerns, the primary reason that I requested the study was for the issue that we are discussing this morning, addressed by Senate Bill 239.

In rural Wisconsin, there have been distinct challenges to providing the highest level of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) possible – especially with the increased demands on skills, training and recruitment/retention of these highly trained volunteers. One of these rural challenges is the desire to upgrade EMS responders to a higher level for the benefit of the communities that they serve.

For instance, a rural department that wants to provide IVs, additional medications via IV, etc. would train EMT Basics at the EMT Advanced level. The benefit is that a higher level of service is available in less time than calling in a nearby paramedic agency, however, this poses a unique challenge.

Many rural EMS agencies have split provider levels because many lower level volunteer EMTs do not have the time to spend hundreds of hours upgrading to a higher level EMT. Once an EMS service is licensed at a higher level, they are required to provide at least one EMT on the first ambulance out the door who is trained to that level. Unfortunately, the good intentions of service providers are inadvertently sending some illegal ambulances out the door, because of a lack of staffing.

This bill is a simple reform that no longer ties the EMT license and scope of training to a rural EMS provider's license level, but rather the rural EMS provider's highest level of service to the license level of the EMT on board the ambulance. Please note that the flexibility provided in this bill is only allowed in coverage areas where the largest single municipality has a population of less than 10,000.

Our neighbors to the south, Illinois, had a similar model that was signed into law in 2013, Public Act 098-0608. This rural EMS bill is also modeled after other rural EMS initiatives that were signed into law in the 2015-2016 session of the Wisconsin Legislature.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and I encourage you to support Senate Bill 239.

Honorable Senators,

Thank you so much for considering Senate Bill 239. Senate Bill 239 has been crafted to greatly assist the EMS care for rural Wisconsin communities like Durand. While it is cost prohibitive to pay for full-time Advanced Life Support staffing in rural areas, there are often members on the ambulance that have more advanced training, and currently work elsewhere at a more advanced level than the service is licensed at. Durand currently has three providers licensed above the level of the Durand Municipal Ambulance Service. Senate Bill 239 will allow these providers to practice at their level of skill to provide the best care to the patient.

I also believe Senate Bill 239 will provide another small piece to assist with staffing rural ambulance services. It is a helpless feeling when you know how to help the patient, but are legally not allowed to save their life. I know of several medics who feel so constrained by the current law, that they don't even want to work on a Basic-level service, as they know they would be put in situations where if they were at their full-time employment they could save the life of the patient, but with the licensing restrictions, they are unable to perform those same life-saving actions in their home community. The ethical and legal dilemma this creates is enough to deter skilled workers from assisting in rural communities. Senate Bill 239 will assist with clearing up some of these dilemmas.

I would like to thank you again for your time in considering and pressing forward with passing this important legislation. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Peter Pillman, Director

Durand Municipal Ambulance Service