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

Emergency Medical Service responders are currently licensed by the Department of Health Services (DHS) for a period of two years. The level of training for Emergency Responders, EMTs, EMT Advanced members or Paramedics varies significantly. In general, there are between 18 and 42 hours of specific training that must be fulfilled biennially to continue practicing in Wisconsin.

One of the concerns that was discussed during the 2016 Legislative Council Study Committee on Volunteer Firefighter and Emergency Medical Technician Shortages was the access to training and scheduling difficulties for volunteers who work full time jobs and are raising families in the communities they proudly serve. Personally, it had always been extremely challenging as a career pilot, with constantly changing schedules, to locate and complete all of the required modules to continue my service as an EMT.

Providing high quality services to residents of rural areas is a constant challenge for community leaders and EMS directors. One of my goals has been to locate creative outside the box solutions that provide relief for emergency responder agencies while preventing additional burdens and a lower quality of service from becoming the acceptable norm for rural Wisconsin communities. This bill does just that.

Senate Bill 659 closely mirrors a policy issue that was removed from Governor Walker's budget proposal last year. This bill would change the renewal period from a two year to a three year process to strike a balance of providing much needed flexibility while ensuring adequate continuing education for our first responders.

Please note that across the nation, renewal cycles vary from one to five year periods. The majority of states (44) already utilize either a two or three year renewal cycle. This proposed flexibility is common sense and keeps our state well within accepted practices nationwide.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and I encourage you to support Senate Bill 659.