

Written Testimony

Date: March 17, 2015

To: Kansas Senate Committee on Transportation

From: Joe House, Executive Director Emergency Medical Services Board

RE: SB 274, Creating the seat belt safety fund and increasing the fine for adult seat belt violations

The Emergency Medical Services Board (Board of EMS) is the state regulatory board charged with the efficient and effective regulation of emergency medical services (EMS) and to ensure that quality out-of-hospital care is available to the citizens of Kansas. Our agency's mission is to promote EMS through the consistent application of laws and to provide support for the ambulance services, EMS professionals, and EMS educational organizations.

While the Board of EMS supports the increased education of teenagers regarding seat belt usage and occupant safety; supports the Seat Belts are for Everyone (SAFE) program; and supports EMS involvement with the SAFE program; we have concerns about the effects of the reduction in disbursed percentage to the EMS revolving fund.

The EMS revolving fund was established by legislature in 2007 and began as a 2.50% distribution. Senate Substitute for HB 2226 passed with 2010 Legislature that reduced the distribution to the current 2.28%. Monies from this fund are directly distributed to each of the six EMS regional councils and to local EMS services. The funds received are utilized to assist in obtaining patient care equipment and training that cannot be funded completely through other means. Local EMS services are consistently challenged by decreasing federal Medicare payments, reduction in local government budgets which typically subsidize emergency services, and very low state Medicaid payment rates.

In FY 2009, the EMS revolving fund was credited \$536,961 from the 2.50% distribution. In FY 2014, the EMS revolving fund was credited \$397,406 from the 2.28% distribution. These funds have not increased since FY 2009 and include a \$15 increase in fines to all traffic infractions granted by the 2010 Legislature. The EMS revolving fund has averaged just over \$1.0 million in local EMS service requests for funding annually.

The Board of EMS believes that the EMS revolving fund is very important to local EMS services and provides much needed equipment and training.

We have reviewed the fiscal note and documents provided by the proponents of SB 274 and have concerns about the potential loss of funds critical to EMS services throughout Kansas as well as the long-term sustainability in maintaining this funding source. As you consider SB 274, please consider what steps could be taken to protect this important funding source.

Joe House
Executive Director