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STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Capitol Update By Senator Howard Marklein April 16, 2021

One Down – More To Go: Removing Obstacles for Rural EMS Volunteers

The State Senate passed one of my bills that will help small, rural, local emergency medical service departments in our communities. Senate Bill (SB) 89, reduces barriers to entry for Emergency Medical Responders (EMRs), by making the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) exam optional for EMRs.

EMS departments are staples of our rural communities. However, many rural, volunteer departments are struggling to recruit new members and retain current members. In the Fall of 2019, I held four “Rural Volunteer EMS Summits” across the 17th Senate District to answer the question, “*What can the state do to encourage volunteers and help with recruitment and retention of rural volunteer EMS?*” Nearly 70 EMS volunteers, representing almost 30 different departments, attended. SB 89 is one of three bills that are the direct result of feedback I received at these Summits.

Again, SB 89 will make the NREMT exam optional for EMRs. However, individual departments will have the ability to decide whether or not the NREMT exam will still be required for credentialing with their department. I have consistently heard that the NREMT exam is difficult, expensive, and doesn’t always test for relevant information. Many departments told me that they would have two, three, or even eight more volunteers if the NREMT exam was not a required part of the initial licensure process. No less than 10 other states, including Minnesota, do not require the NREMT exam for EMRs.

It is important to note that even with this change, SB 89 leaves in place the requirement that each EMR would need to complete a Department of Health Services (DHS) approved training course and pass all other applicable tests and hands-on experiences to receive licensure. This bill simply states that DHS cannot require the NREMT exam to be one of the requirements for licensure for EMRs.

This bill is designed to help and support rural, volunteer EMS departments. The changes are not designed to intrude on the services that Paramedic departments provide. They do important work and are vital to a functioning EMS system in Wisconsin.

SB 89, as well as SB 88 and SB 90 did not start in the State Capitol. All of these bills started in Darlington, Elroy, Lancaster and Plain. They were written because the people who are

volunteering in our communities told me that we needed to make some changes to help them – to help you.

These changes are not going to solve the volunteer shortage overnight, but will remove obstacles and improve state-level regulation. There is still work to do, but I am proud of this initiative to support the local men and women who respond when we need them.

For more information and to connect with me, visit my website <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/17/marklein> and subscribe to my weekly E-Update by sending an email to Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov. Do not hesitate to call (608) 266-0703 if you have any questions or need assistance with any state-related matters.