



National Association of State EMS Officials

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March 26, 2010

The Honorable Karen St. Germain
Louisiana House of Representatives
State Capitol
P.O. Box 44486
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4486

Re: Louisiana House Bill 1030

Dear Representative St. Germain:

The emergency care system deals with an extraordinary range of patients, from febrile infants, to business executives with chest pain, to elderly patients who have fallen. Each year in the United States approximately 114 million visits occur to emergency departments and 16 million of these patients arrive by ambulance. For patients who cannot breathe, are in hemorrhagic shock, or are in cardiac arrest, the decisions made and actions taken by EMS personnel may determine the outcome as much as subsequent hospital-based care and may mean the difference between life and death. Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics function as medical surrogates in the field. They perform a wide range of simple and complex medical procedures, for example, they start IVs, administer drugs, obtain and interpret electrocardiograms, administer electrical shocks to a stopped or erratically beating heart, perform needle chest decompression, and provide lifesaving emergency airway procedures. Just as a physician wouldn't be permitted to provide brain surgery without valid credentials and the proper support and equipment provided in a licensed health care facility, EMS techniques require educated and highly skilled medical workers functioning within an organized EMS system. They are dependent on medical (physician) oversight as a fundamental component of providing patient care and they require system integration with ongoing coordination, evaluation, and education to ensure professional competency.

Among its multifaceted responsibilities, each state government has the general power and responsibility to protect the health, safety, and order of the population within its geographic boundaries. States accomplish this role by setting and enforcing standards for health care organizations and professionals. By exempting certain public employees who render emergency medical services from regulation, House Bill 1030 will set a dangerous precedent in Louisiana that will place patients at risk and usurp the state and local government's authority to regulate health care within its jurisdiction.

The National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO) believes that the quality of physician medical direction has a significant impact upon the system and patient outcomes and that the lead agency for the state EMS system is a principal facet of our emergency care system. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue with you as needed.

Sincerely,

Steven Blessing
President
National Association of State EMS Officials