



May 10, 2019

The Honorable Richard Pan
State Capitol, Room 5114
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 438 (Hertzberg) – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Pan:

On behalf of the Cosumnes Community Services District, I am writing to urge you to support SB 438, which addresses a critical public safety issue involving the 9-1-1 dispatch process for emergency medical and pre-hospital transportation services.

Since 1973, every local public agency has been required by the Warren-911-Emergency Assistance Act to establish and operate an emergency telephone system using the digits 9-1-1 for emergency medical services (EMS), police and firefighting. Moreover, counties have a duty under state laws to establish “medical control” policies related to the quality of pre-hospital medical care provided by both local fire agencies and private ambulance companies.

By giving an expansive interpretation of their powers, some county EMS administrators believe they can override a city or fire district’s right to respond to medical emergencies within its own borders or allow a private ambulance company to control the EMS dispatch center and refuse to dispatch fire-based units in favor of their own private ambulances.

SB 438 would make it clear that county EMS administrators do not have the power to dictate when city or fire district units can be dispatched to respond to a 9-1-1 call in their own jurisdictions or empower a private ambulance company to bypass potentially closer fire-based units or downgrade the severity of medical emergencies so that it can dispatch its own ambulances.

In San Joaquin County, for example, the county allowed the City of Tracy to deploy its EMS units to respond to serious medical emergency calls but not “low acuity” calls, even where the city fire department could arrive at the scene faster than the private ambulance company’s unit. One fatality occurred several years ago in Tracy where it took the private ambulance 19 minutes to arrive at the scene. This death hasn’t been the only unfortunate incident where a minor medical emergency escalated into a more serious medical incident as a result of

bypassing closer fire-based units and relying on a slower response time from the private provider.

It is bad public policy to condone delayed responses to 9-1-1 calls. Sooner or later delays caused by the county EMS administrator's overly broad interpretation of the scope of "medical control" constitute a danger to a patient's health and safety. For these reasons, we respectfully request you vote "aye" on SB 438.

Respectfully submitted,



Gil Albiani
President
Cosumnes Community Services District

cc: Jeff Meston, President, California Fire Chiefs Association