

**Testimony from Brian M. Daniels, Executive Director
Governor's FY 2021 Budget (H7171) – Article 6, Section 2 – EMS Licensing Fees
House Committee on Finance
February 25, 2020**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify. The League of Cities and Towns strongly opposes the Governor's proposal to charge new licensing fees for municipal and volunteer Emergency Medical Services (EMS) professionals in order to close the state deficit.

The Governor's budget would end a long-standing provision in state law that waives licensing fees for municipal and volunteer EMS professionals. According to budget documents from the Office of Management and Budget, these new fees would raise just over \$300,000 in revenue. While this is not a large amount of money in the state budget, it is another example of cities and towns being asked to pay more to close the state deficit. These new fees would have a disproportionate impact on communities with volunteer fire and rescue services, as those EMS personnel would likely be forced to pay out of pocket. Throughout the country, it is increasingly difficult for volunteer fire and rescue forces to recruit and retain people to serve their communities, and that trend holds true in Rhode Island as well. We should be doing everything possible to encourage people to join volunteer services – not erecting barriers and raising costs.

Unfortunately, this proposal is only the latest state effort to add new costs and mandates on local governments' emergency services. In 2018, the Department of Health proposed, based on the recommendations of the Ambulance Service Coordinating Advisory Board, a series of regulatory changes to EMS services, equipment and staffing – which would have cost cities and towns at least \$900,000 per year. Fortunately, in response to our objections to this unfunded mandate, the Department rescinded the costly proposals. Last year, the General Assembly passed legislation adding a municipal member to the Ambulance Services Advisory Board to ensure that local government is represented in future regulatory decisions. Despite that improvement, the Department of Health continues to recommend new fees and mandates, increasing the cost of local emergency services.

We ask again for your support of our local rescue services by opposing the new EMS license fees for municipal and volunteer employees. Thank you for your consideration of our views.