

# Senate Health and Human Services Committee

*Sophie Walsh 271-3469*

**HB 559**, relative to staffing requirements in emergency medical transport vehicles.

**Hearing Date:** April 16, 2025

**Time Opened:** 10:57 a.m.

**Time Closed:** 11:13 a.m.

**Members of the Committee Present:** Senators Rochefort, Prentiss and Long

**Members of the Committee Absent:** Senators Avard and Birdsell

**Bill Analysis:** This bill provides that not more than one emergency medical care provider shall be required to provide care to a patient during transport in an ambulance or other emergency medical service vehicle.

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**Sponsors:**

Rep. Rhodes

Rep. A. Murray

Rep. D. Mannion

Rep. Thackston

Rep. Wheeler

Rep. Proulx

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**Who supports the bill:** Rep. Jennifer Rhodes, Rep. Mark Proulx, Curtis Howland, and Aubrey Freedman.

**Who opposes the bill:** Rep. Janet Lucas, Danielle Doughty, Patrick Doughty, Christopher Stawasz (NH Ambulance Association), Jack Wozmak (Cheshire County EMS).

**Who is neutral on the bill:** Justin Romanello (State).

**Summary of testimony presented:**

Representative Jennifer Rhodes, Cheshire – District 17 & Representative Mark Proulx, Hillsborough – District 15

- Representative Rhodes explained that this bill is the result of one of the fire chiefs in her district coming to her about staffing difficulties for the local town ambulance following COVID.
- During the pandemic, former Governor Sununu issued an emergency order allowing ambulances to have two people: a driver and a paramedic.
- While this emergency order is no longer in place, staffing difficulties persist in many departments.
- This bill inserts the exact language of the emergency order into law.

- Representative Proulx emphasized the need to address staffing shortages. He explained that the Epping Fire Department has three ambulances, one of which they are always able to get out the door with proper personnel. They are usually able to get the second ambulance as well, but there are times when that is not possible.
- The Epping Fire Department has available firefighters who may not have the certificate but have enough medical experience to know how to help.
- Representative Proulx emphasized that they are looking for an option to get the ambulance to somebody's door in a timely manner. Depending on the level of the call, they may call for EMS or utilize a paramedic intercept service.
- He explained that this bill does not say every department has to do this, but it could be useful in situations where it is necessary to save a life. He said that while it is not the best, it is something.
- Representative Proulx noted that there is one ambulance service in opposition to this bill and explained that they want departments to utilize their services.
- Representative Proulx stated that we need to let the towns serve their people and this is a good compromise to do so.
- Senator Rochefort asked how many departments took advantage of this during the pandemic.
- Representative Proulx stated that his department (Epping) did and Representative Rhodes explained that at least three out of the five towns in her district did.
- Representative Rhodes acknowledged that some may say towns should be paying their paramedics more and explained that a lot of these departments utilize volunteer paramedics.
- She emphasized that they are simply trying to make this an option for departments as it once was. They have heard from departments around the state that this would be nice to use if needed. She said this should not be the norm and they do not expect it to be.
- Senator Rochefort referenced Representative Proulx's comment about this not being the best and asked how we could make this the best bill.
- Representative Proulx explained that the situation itself is not the best, as there are not enough people. He said this is a good bill for what we are trying to do, but we would need more people to fix the issue. The pool of EMS in the state is small and continuing to shrink. In his department, there are some people who work part-time for multiple departments, attempting to fill in the gaps where needed.
- Senator Prentiss stated that she was once the Chief of EMS and managed the licensing and regulation around staffing for the state. She cited that in 2020, 0.8% of total transports were conducted with a single licensed provider versus

99.2% of transports meeting normal staffing requirements. 2021 had similar statistics, with 0.9% conducted with a single licensed provider and 99.1% meeting normal staffing requirements. She noted they were correct in explaining that this option was available but not utilized often.

- Senator Prentiss asked Representative Proulx if it is his understanding that an ambulance can go to someone's house with one licensed provider but needs two to transport a patient. Representative Proulx confirmed.
- Senator Prentiss referenced the safety of personnel and asked what the plan is to ensure that everyone will be prepared to go from the scene to the hospital.
- Representative Proulx explained that these individuals are already firefighters, so they are already thinking about safety. He emphasized that if they did not think someone was fully prepared, they would train them.
- Senator Prentiss clarified that there would always be someone within the department appropriately prepared to drive the ambulance, not provide care.
- Representative Proulx confirmed and emphasized that it would not be a random citizen.
- Senator Prentiss asked if Representative Proulx thinks that scenario could happen with the language as written.
- Representative Proulx said he would hope not, but would be open to an amendment ensuring it is a member of the department.
- Senator Prentiss asked if it would be a considerable option for the commissioner of the Department of Safety to write licensing waivers for certain situations, as this has been done in rulemaking.
- Representative Proulx said he is not sure what that process would like if such a situation arose, but he thinks there is a need now. He noted that this was not heavily used during COVID, so he does not think this will be a big thing. He emphasized that nobody wants just one EMT, but sometimes it is a necessity.
- Representative Proulx said he understands Senator Prentiss' point, but they are just looking to have this tool available if it becomes necessary.
- Representative Rhodes shared a personal story about getting into a snowmobile accident in which she broke her pelvis and her arm. She said she does not remember how many people were in the ambulance, but even if it was just one, she would have been extremely grateful.
- She said she understands the concerns about safety and emphasized that they are just trying to give departments an opportunity to continue serving their small towns. She noted that not every situation is life threatening, and personnel are trained enough to make decisions about how many people they need for a call.