



Colorado EMS Chiefs, Managers and Directors

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Please Support SB19-065, Concerning the Creation of a Peer Health Assistance Program for Emergency Medical Service Providers!

The Colorado EMS Chiefs, Managers and Directors (EMS-CMD) section of the Emergency Medical Services Association of Colorado **ask you to support SB19-065, Concerning the Creation of a Peer Health Assistance Program for Emergency Medical Service Providers by Senator Garcia.** This Bill creates a peer health assistance program for emergency medical service (EMS) providers funded through fees collected from every applicant upon initial or renewal of a certification as and EMS provider.

All around Colorado EMS providers, both paid and volunteer, respond to and care for persons experiencing medical and trauma emergencies. Ambulances and other first response vehicles are equipped, staffed and ready to provide the best possible patient care services whenever and wherever needed 24/7/365. However, one of the most significant benefits and sources of job satisfaction of being an EMS provider is also the most detrimental pitfall when assisting patients in medical or traumatic need. As a pre-hospital provider we make a difference every day when our efforts result in positive patient outcomes. At the same time, constant and on-going exposure to assaults, traumatic events, neglect and other events without positive outcomes takes its toll on individual EMS providers that can, and does, lead to depression, aggressive behaviors, substance abuse, and even suicide. These effects can be even more pronounced on rural EMS providers are frequently exposed to catastrophic events that involve patients EMS providers know including friends, neighbors and even family members. Currently, there is nowhere for EMS providers to turn to receive effective counseling and substance abuse support services similar to those provided to other healthcare providers and professions. In EMS, when a provider with a substance abuse problem is discovered they get fired, lose their EMS certification, lose their healthcare benefits that eliminates their ability to pay for and receive meaningful treatment services, and get charged with a crime! There is no effective and efficient pathway to treatment, recovery and a way back into the profession they love so much. This Bill fixes and funds these disparities and provides a means to recovery and a pathway back into EMS service.

If passed this Bill accomplishes, resolves and provides the following things:

- Enhances equity for EMS providers providing them with PEER support services similar to those provided to other healthcare providers and professions in the State;
- Provides for the education of EMS providers with respect to the recognition and prevention of physical, emotional, psychological, and substance abuse problems and provides for intervention when necessary;
- Offers assistance to EMS providers in identifying physical, emotional, psychological and substance abuse problems;
- Evaluates the extent of physical, emotional, psychological and substance abuse problems and refers the EMS providers to appropriate treatment;
- Monitors the ongoing status of EMS providers who have been referred for treatment;
- Provides counseling and support to EMS providers and their families referred for treatment; and,
- Establishes pathways for EMS providers back into the EMS system.

Thank you for your time and consideration regarding our comments on very important piece of legislation.
Please support and vote for SB19-065!

WE ADVOCATE, COMMUNICATE and EDUCATE

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