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DEPARTMENT OF
FIRE

DENNIS SMITH
FIRE CHIEF

CITY OF SACRAMENTO
CALIFORNIA

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July 19, 2000

Law and Legislation Committee
Sacramento, California

Honorable Members in Session:

SUBJECT: AB2508 - Regulate Staffing of Advanced Life Support Units

LOCATION AND COUNCIL DISTRICT: Citywide

RECOMMENDATION: For information only.

CONTACT PERSON: Dennis Smith, Fire Chief, 264-5268
Rod Chong, Deputy Fire Chief, 264-7368

FOR COMMITTEE MEETING OF: August 3, 2000

SUMMARY:

The passage of this assembly bill would mandate the number of paramedics based on square mileage served and calls per square mile. Additionally, it would also mandate a minimum number of paramedics on an ambulance. The Fire Department opposes the passage of this bill in its current form. During the City Council's recess, the Fire Department sent a letter of opposition via the City Manager's Office.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- The Fire Department has been providing Advanced Life Support Services to the City since 1994.
- During the past several years, the department's four busiest ambulances have been staffed with two paramedics (EMT-Ps). Our remaining five ambulances are staffed with one emergency medical technician (EMT-1) and one EMT-P.
- These ambulance units are regularly supplemented by the additional EMT-Ps present on 70 percent of our first responder engines and trucks.

- The current system results in emergency on-scene care and transport care often provided by more than one EMT-P.
- With our current level of our approved staffing and our current agreement with the local union on how to staff the units, we would not be able to comply with the staffing requirements of this bill.
- The amended assembly bill requires cities to provide two EMT-Ps on ambulances with an average number of 8,000 or more persons per square mile or an average of 500 or more emergency medical service calls per square mile in a calendar year.
- While public safety is one of our City Council's top priorities, the department believes that a mandatory requirement of two EMT-Ps per ambulance, while essential on our busiest units, is not necessarily the most effective use of our limited resources.
- The County Fire Chiefs association, which the City of Sacramento Fire Department is an active member, took a stand of opposition. Each participating agency's chief was requested to send a letter of opposition.
- Since the City Council was about to go on recess, the letter of opposition was sent by the Chief of the Sacramento Fire Department via the City Manager's Office. A copy of the letter is attached for your review.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

A mandatory requirement of two EMT-Ps per ambulance would cause an increase in program costs. At least 30 additional positions would have to be added to the approved budget. Approximate additional costs for the first year would be \$2,600,000 to hire, train, outfit, and staff the ambulances. On-going costs would be approximately \$2,200,000 per year.


ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:

This report proposes no environmental changes in the existing emergency medical services program.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS:

This program has been mandated by the City Council to cover its direct costs through fees collected for service provided. In addition, the City Council has mandated that the fees for this program will not exceed those of the local private ambulance provider.

ESBD CONSIDERATIONS: Not applicable.



Dennis Smith
Fire Chief



BETTY MASUOKA
Assistant City Manager



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June 29, 2000

The Honorable Carl Washington
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 2136
Sacramento, CA 94249-0001

RE: AB 2508 -Emergency Medical Services: Advanced Life Support Units

Dear Assembly Member Washington:

The City of Sacramento opposes passage of Assembly Bill 2508 concerning the requirement for local medical services agencies in certain cities to require advanced life support units within their jurisdictions to utilize, at a minimum, two Emergency Medical Technician-Paramedics (EMT-Ps) working in regular teams on the same unit. In addition, the Sacramento Fire Department opposes this bill because it requires cities to maintain a designated minimum per capita ratio of EMT-Ps to population.

During the past several years, the City of Sacramento has provided advanced life support services with our four busiest ambulances staffed with two EMT-Ps. Our remaining five ambulances are staffed with one EMT-P and one EMT-1. These ambulance units are frequently supplemented by the additional EMT-Ps present on 70 percent of our first responder engines and trucks. The current system results in emergency on-scene care and on-board ambulance care often provided by more than one EMT-P. Overall, the medical services we provide to the public are maintained at an excellent and highly responsive level.

While public safety is one of our City Council's top priorities, we believe that a mandatory requirement of two EMT-Ps per ambulance, while essential on our busiest units, is not necessarily the most effective use of our limited resources.

Thank you for your support of local government.

Sincerely,

Dennis Smith
Fire Chief