



COSUMNES FIRE DEPARTMENT

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*** * * ASSEMBLY FLOOR ALERT * * ***

File Item #71

Senate Bill 438 (Hertzberg) – “AYE” Vote Requested

DATE: August 27, 2019

TO: Honorable Members, California State Assembly

FROM: Michael W. McLaughlin, Fire Chief

RE: Senate Bill 438 (Hertzberg) – Emergency medical services: dispatch.

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Cosumnes Fire Department strongly supports Senate Bill 438 (Hertzberg), which has been approved with overwhelming bi-partisan support and *we respectfully request your “AYE” vote on this bill when it comes before you.*

The most sacred mission of government at any level is protecting the lives and health of its people. For more than seven decades, the mission of California’s fire service has included providing fast, effective emergency medical service response. SB 438 ensures that this hallowed responsibility is not passed off or compromised by motivations other than what matters most – patient care.

Under SB 438 public agencies are authorized to delegate, assign, or subcontract their 9-1-1-call processing or emergency notification duties with respect to dispatching emergency response services only to another public agency, which includes a joint powers agency or through a cooperative agreement. The bill grandfathers all existing arrangements that delegated, assigned or contracted call processing duties to a private entity, but also provides that the extension or renegotiation of such arrangements must include the consent of all affected public safety agency pre-hospital EMS providers. SB 438 appropriately dictates a process to ensure uninterrupted call processing services will continue to be provided should the existing grandfathered arrangements lack consent or unanimity among the public safety agencies.

This bill does *nothing* to shield public agencies from medical control policies required by local emergency medical services agencies (LEMSAs), but rather mandates that they follow LEMSA protocols related to emergency medical dispatch and pre-arrival instructions. SB 438 simply recognizes that these accountable public agencies must take responsibility for dispatch and response modes that best protect their communities and are demanded by their citizenry. Every dispatch and resource mode must always meet or exceed LEMSA medical control policies.

In a life-or-death situation, it is about deploying a rapid response. The first and often most critical life-and-death responsibility is 9-1-1-call processing services that generate that rapid response. When seconds count, it is the sworn duty of public fire agencies to deploy the closest and fastest response possible appropriate to the emergency. They are the most direct and accountable public safety providers -- accountable to the public and the taxpayers whom they serve.

The responsibility of public safety agencies to deploy a rapid response in an emergency should not be influenced by anyone's bottom line. Few public agencies have taken the risky step of privatizing their 9-1-1-call processing. In situations where it has happened without the concurrence of fire agencies, the results have proven disastrous.

The safety of all Californians and those who visit the Golden State is the highest priority of government and ensuring the best possible standard of emergency care for each is critical. This important policy goal is achieved through SB 438. **For these reasons, we urge your support for this important public safety measure.**