



**House  
Legislative  
Analysis  
Section**

Washington Square Building, Suite 1025  
Lansing, Michigan 48909  
Phone 517/373-6466

**AMBULANCE OPERATION HOURS**

**House Bill 5512 (Substitute H-1)**  
**First Analysis (3-29-88)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Thomas Scott**  
**Committee: Public Health**

18351177

JUL 05 1988

MCL 333.20756

***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

The Public Health Code requires ambulance operations to provide at least one ambulance and proper personnel and equipment for response to requests for emergency assistance 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. However, this requirement can put a burden on nonprofit volunteer organizations which are plagued with high personnel turnover rates. Nonprofit volunteer ambulance services are often caught in the perplexing situation of wanting to provide a community service, yet not always having enough personnel to both train newcomers and perform the service which they were established to provide. It has been suggested that exempting nonprofit ambulance services from the 24 hour per day operation requirement would give these services the flexibility they need to stay in operation.

***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

The bill would amend the code to make an exception to the 24 hour operation requirement for ambulance services which were operated by nonprofit organizations that did not charge a fee for their services and did not pay their personnel. When not in operation, nonprofit ambulance services would have to provide for an automated telephone call forwarding system that transferred requests for emergency assistance to either a 911 universal emergency telephone number or to a 24 hour ambulance operation.

MCL 333.20756

***FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:***

According to the House Fiscal Agency, the bill would have no fiscal implications. (3-28-88)

***ARGUMENTS:***

***For:***

The current 24 hour per day operation requirement is a good concept but does not take into consideration the high turnover rates which can plague nonprofit ambulance services. Nonprofit volunteer ambulance services can play a vital role in the communities in which they serve as they provide much needed back-up to public ambulance services that are often overburdened with calls. By exempting nonprofit ambulance services from the 24 hour requirement, the bill would allow them to remain in operation and at least provide some ambulance relief to communities with a high need for the service.

***Against:***

One of the reasons that the 24 hour per day operation requirement is a good concept is that it ensures that when a person calls an ambulance service, he or she can expect to receive an immediate response. Ambulance services are often called during life-threatening situations when an immediate response can be imperative. The time that it takes to route a call to another service may mean the difference between life or death. Therefore, if a nonprofit

volunteer organization cannot provide an ambulance service 24 hours per day, then it probably should not be in the business.

In addition, there are inherent problems built into a system which provides only for call-forwarding and no additional information. For example, in numerous communities the only ambulance service available is a nonprofit volunteer ambulance service. If a call did not get forwarded and that service was not available, residents in that area would have no alternative service and no idea of whom to call next. Thus, if call forwarding were implemented in a community, callers should be informed as to whom should be called in case a call was not forwarded.

***Response:*** Currently, there are communities with ambulance systems operating with a call forwarding system. These systems have provided communities with service without major complications. Thus, it should not cause undue upset if a volunteer ambulance service wanted to establish a similar system.

***Rebuttal:*** Although some communities do have a call forwarding systems, those systems differ from the call forwarding system proposed in the legislation on two important points. First, the communities which do have call forwarding systems normally provide these systems during certain fixed hours. Second, the call forwarding system is not used as a substitute for service. For example, a community may use a direct call system between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. when a police dispatcher is available to answer calls and use a call forwarding system to the fire department after 5 p.m. However, in these situations ambulance service is still available and it is quite clear who is supposed to answer the calls.

***POSITIONS:***

The Department of Public Health has no position on the legislation. (3-29-88)

The Emergency Mobile Medical Technicians and Trainee Association takes no position on the bill. (3-29-88)

The Michigan Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians takes no position on the bill. (3-29-88)

The Tri-County Emergency Medical Service Council takes no position on the bill. (3-29-88)

The Executive Director of Upper Peninsula Emergency Medical Services Corporation opposes the concept of the bill. (3-29-88)

H.B. 5512 (3-29-88)