

SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY

EXHIBIT NO.

12

2-18-05

~~BILL NO.~~

SB 448

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2/16/2005

Honorable Ladies and Gentlemen

I submit the following remarks in reference to Senate Bill 448, a Bill for an Act entitled: "An Act Granting the Board of Medical Examiners the Power to Adopt Rules Authorizing Emergency Medical Technicians to Provide Emergency or Other Care in a Hospital Emergency Department."

As a chief nurse executive and operations officer for a rural critical access hospital, I strongly oppose this bill. Specifically, I oppose the removal of the word "emergency" when describing the care level emergency medical technicians can provide. Emergency medical technicians are trained to deliver emergency care, they are not trained to deliver medical care.

The educational difference required between learning emergency care and medical care constitutes more than two years difference. By making this change, you will decrease the quality and standard of care in hospitals in the state of Montana. As an administrator who has successfully proven that our small rural hospital can provide quality care equal to urban hospitals, I urge you to refrain from this change. Do not lower our standard of care.

Additionally, I oppose the expansion of an EMT's care scope from "the first critical minutes immediately after an accident" to "hours after an accident." This change flies in the face of the Emergency Medical System premise. This premise purports that EMTs are trained to render emergency care and promptly deliver the victim to the next highest level of care. By expanding the time in the manner proposed in this bill, you delay entry into the next highest level of care. Such delay runs counter to what we have worked for with the EMS system.

Finally, I oppose the expansion of EMT's scope of practice into the Emergency Department as written in this bill with the Board of Medical Examiners to, by rule, establish standards, protocols, and the scope of practice. We currently employ EMTs in our Emergency Department as ED Technicians. The Montana State Board of Nursing has proposed advanced delegation rules whereby hospitals can more fully use an EMT's emergency care skills. The hospital defines, in job description, roles appropriate to ED Technician (EMT) education and their work remains under the direction of the Emergency Department Registered Nurse. This schema allows appropriate direction,

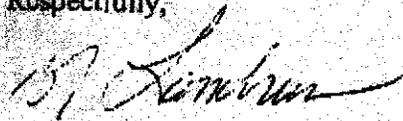
delegation, and assessment of the individual ED Technician's skills. Thus providing safe, high quality emergency and medical care.

Hospital Emergency Department must work as a team and in rural hospitals, the team leader is the ED Nurse as the ED provider is not on site until called by the nurse. An EMT could not replace an RN regardless of what the Board of Medical Examiners might determine their scope because state and federal statutes dictate that a Registered Nurse must complete the initial assessment on every patient.

In summary, this proposed bill does not benefit rural Montana hospitals. While EMTs provide valuable access to the healthcare system through prompt emergency response, their scope should remain as it is currently defined. This bill will not improve quality of hospital emergency department care, it will not increase the number of adequately trained hospital emergency department caregivers, but it will cause conflict between physicians and hospital administrators.

I appreciate your attention to my comments and trust you will give them serious consideration.

Respectfully,



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