

HB 320 Legislative Testimony  
Board of Medical Examiners  
Feb. 2, 2011

Madame Chair and members of the committee; my name is Ryan Burke (BURKE) and I am here to represent the Montana Board of Medical Examiners and voice our concerns on adding another member to the Board.

The Board of Medical Examiners' primary responsibility and obligation is to protect health care consumers through proper licensing and regulation of acupuncturists, physicians, EMTs, physician assistants, podiatrists, and nutritionists.

I want to first thank Representative Schmidt for her interest in the Board's membership. Currently, the Board is comprised of volunteers who all represent either one of the occupations regulated by the board or the general public. In your wisdom, the legislature added a representative to the Board during the 2009 legislative session to represent EMTs. I am honored to serve as the first representative for that position.

Acupuncturists remain the only occupational group that does not have a seat on the Board and such representation is being considered during this session and has passed the House. Should this bill pass, the size of the Board will increase to fourteen members.

We believe adding a second representative for EMTs is simply not needed because few serious EMT issues come to the board. Also, adding another member to the Board will increase Board costs and likely lead to increased licensure fees for EMTs, most of which are volunteers.

Personally, I live and work in Great Falls where I am a volunteer emergency medical technician and a full time firefighter. Essentially, I wear both hats as a paid and unpaid EMT.

The 4,756 licensed emergency medical service providers are well represented by the medical board, regardless of their modality or position. Along with my volunteer EMT position, we also have two EMTs on staff, two medical directors, and experienced physicians with EMS knowledge. There is also medical director committee created to research EMS related issues and bring recommendations to the Board. And soon, we will be adding a part time state medical director that will spend much of their time dealing with EMS issues as well.

The Board doesn't have jurisdiction over firefighters, with the exception of those who hold a license as an EMT. The Board does establish protocols for patient care during emergency medical service calls. In Montana, there are many pre-hospital EMT positions and four different EMT levels- first responder through paramedic. It is impractical to have a representative for every position.

The Board works exceptionally well with the balance you created of five medical doctors, a doctor of osteopath, a podiatrist, a nutritionist, a physician assistant, a volunteer EMT, and two public members. As I noted earlier, the board seat established to represent EMTs is new, and has existed for just over one year. It warrants giving that new structure and representation more time to become more firmly established.

I am available to answer any questions you may have as you deliberate this bill.

Thank you for your consideration and, again, the Board asks that you not pass HB 320.