



- Alameda
- Central California
- Coastal Valleys
- Contra Costa
- El Dorado
- Imperial
- Inland Counties
- Kern
- Los Angeles
- Marin
- Merced
- Monterey
- Mountain-Valley
- Napa
- North Coast
- Northern California
- Orange
- Riverside
- Sacramento
- San Benito
- San Diego
- San Francisco
- San Joaquin
- San Luis Obispo
- San Mateo
- Santa Barbara
- Santa Clara
- Santa Cruz
- Sierra-Sac Valley
- Solano
- Stanislaus
- Tuolumne
- Ventura
- Yolo

August 7, 2023

The Honorable Anthony Portantino
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 412
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: AB 1168 (Bennett): Emergency medical services (EMS): prehospital EMS
As Amended July 13, 2023 – OPPOSE**

Dear Senator Portantino,

The Emergency Medical Services Administrators Association of California (EMSAAC), representing the interests of all 34 California Local EMS Agencies (LEMSAs) covering all 58 California counties write in OPPOSITION to AB 1168, authored by Assembly Member Steve Bennett. LEMSAs ensure the high quality, safe, and equitable delivery of emergency medical services (EMS) care to all of California's residents and visitors. AB 1168 as recently amended seeks to overturn an extensive statutory and case law record that has repeatedly affirmed county responsibility for the administration of emergency medical services and with that, the flexibility to design systems to equitably serve residents throughout their jurisdiction.

The City of Oxnard does not have strong financial footing and there are great concerns about whether they have sufficient budgetary resources to support a new service and responsibility, much less one as volatile as emergency ambulance response where swift action may be needed. In the fall of 2022, The California State Auditor ranked Oxnard in the top one percent of financially at risk cities; The City of Oxnard was ranked 8 out of 430 cities in the study. Large reasons for this ranking are the city's lack of General Fund Reserves (ranked 11th worst), lack of liquidity (ranked 12th worst) and future pension costs (ranked 118th worst) combined with other post-employment benefits (ranked 1st worst).

For example, In 2018, the LEMSA supported the City of Oxnard in increasing their level of service from Basic Life Support (BLS) to Advanced Life Support (ALS), with the addition of a paramedic squad. Since implementation the program has not been staffed 24/7/365, as initially designed and the squad was unstaffed for 18 months during COVID. If the City was truly concerned about the substandard service being received, it would seem that appropriately located ALS units could have bridged that gap. It is unclear whether the lack of staffing could be fully attributed to funding. It seems the City of Oxnard is not in a position to take on any new service responsibilities at this time.

Moreover, mutual aid is one of the back bones of emergency services. In 2019, 1,200 ambulances were redirected to cover the city during unusually busy times.

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This movement of ambulances was only made possible because the City of Oxnard is a part of a larger coordinated system of ambulances administrated by the LEMSA. Should the City choose to abandon this safety net, it is unknown who will respond to those calls in the future when the system demands outstrip the City's ambulances.

AB 1168 causes a great deal of uncertainty for counties who are the responsible local government entity for providing equitable emergency medical services for all of their residents. Unfortunately, this measure creates a system where there will be haves and have nots – well-resourced cities or districts will be able to provide robust services whereas disadvantaged communities, with a less robust tax base, will have a patchwork of providers – the very problem the EMS Act, passed over 40 years ago, intended to resolve.

Our respective members are deeply alarmed not only by the language within AB 1168, but by the misrepresentation of facts by the author and sponsor that have yet to be validated by an independent third party. This bill ultimately creates fragmented and inequitable EMS medical services statewide. For these reasons, EMSAAC strongly OPPOSES AB 1168.

Thank you,



Nick Clay
EMSAAC President

cc: The Honorable Steve Bennett, Member, California State Assembly
Honorable Members, Senate Appropriations Committee
Agnes Lee, Consultant, Senate Appropriations Committee
Tim Conaghan, Policy Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus
Joe Parra, Policy Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus
Angela Pontes, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Governor Newsom
Samantha Lui, Deputy Secretary, Legislative Affairs, CalHHS
Brendan McCarthy, Deputy Secretary for Program and Fiscal Affairs, CalHHS
Julie Souliere, Assit. Secretary, Office of Program and Fiscal Affairs, CalHHS