



OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters
AFL-CIO CLC

Senate Committee on Labor and Business

February 15, 2023

Chair Kathleen Taylor

Vice Chair Daniel Bonham

2023 Oregon Legislature

For the record I'm Karl Koenig, President the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council representing the 3700 career firefighters EMT's and Paramedics throughout Oregon

We are here today in opposition to SB 857 also known as REPLICA

Oregon EMS is a mature progressive system made up of dedicated individuals, both on the street and administratively. SB 857 purports to fix a problem that Oregon does not have.

- At its inception REPLICA's goal was admirable, during Catastrophic Emergency Situations it would allow out of state paramedics and EMTs to legally operate in situations requiring less than a proclamation of the Governor to practice, not the day to day operations of an Ambulance or Medic Unit. REPLICA is not for Oregon and here is why we think so.
- As just one example "within five years background checks will be compulsory for all members of compact" Oregon EMS already requires extensive background checks to include FBI checks to ensure the public's safety. This proposal as written, brings background checks within 5 years. Oregon is doing FBI background checks for at least 10 years. In speaking with my colleagues who work in Louisiana and Colorado no background checks have been performed by Replica since they joined the compact. The backlog of licensure in Louisiana is creating a larger shortage of paramedics with the inability to get a background check completed.
- The notion of increasing the public's access to EMS personnel with this bill is at best unmeasurable and worse case just a fantasy. There is no data to support that paramedics are waiting for SB 857 to pass then come to the promise land, Oregon, to begin a career in EMS.
- As one example of the lack of transparency or performance REPLICA has billed the State of Colorado \$131,450 annually since 2015 with a promise of one (1) FTE and to date over \$1,000,000 expended by Colorado, no FTE and no service.



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- During unprecedented pressure on our EMS Systems throughout Oregon that a yet to be named organization with one representative from Oregon is going to efficiently direct, advise and improve our EMS Delivery system?
- Oregon is a collective bargaining state and has been since 1973, we are not about to have a regulatory body, from another state inform us what we are earning
- Subrogating our authority to a yet to be developed Commission puts Oregon's Fire Fighters and EMT's in the impossible situation of serving another regulatory agency without the benefit representation in the event of a disagreement. Oregon's Firefighter EMT's and Paramedics lose.
- A Quasi-Governmental Organization with subpoena powers, taxing authority, ambiguous public meeting requirements, along with a proposed single representative on the COMPACT Commission is nothing this State or its Paramedics need
- Not one mention of labor or labor representatives in REPLICA, Oregon EMT's and Paramedics deserve a continued voice in our profession
- We are concerned with nebulous terms such as the undefined "appropriate authority" and the granting of a higher power to facilitate the "Day to Day" operations of EMS providers in Oregon.
- On the first page is the statement "enhances the State's ability to protect the public's health and safety" Oregon's system is not in need of a Commission located in another State determining our level of service to the public. Local control loses, public loses.
- Oregon OHA EMS administratively oversees regulatory matters regarding 100% of the states EMT's and Paramedics. Administrative oversight by a Commission in another State is problematic. Oregon would only have one representative and therefore the Oregon's EMS Professionals are potentially represented by "one" person of currently unnamed affiliation
- The COMPACT states a that a public hearing regarding rule adoption will occur only if 25 people or a governmental sub-division request it. This model will be funded with Public Dollars and must be open without needing to request it. Oregon cannot be a part of any COMPACT that gives its right of transparency and public meeting laws away.
- Other areas of concern are the lack of Communications inter-operability, vehicle licensing for public agencies across state lines or of ability to assure proper quality control. State agencies going into other states to ensure compliance with COMPACT



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rules and regulations? These are unreasonable demands on Oregon and the OHA to ensure compliance

- Until Minnesota's signing on to REPLICA only New Hampshire has Collective Bargaining. The remaining States on board with REPLICA are Right to Work States. This COMPACT brings no voice or workplace protections for the EMT's and Paramedics taking care of our citizens and visitors to Oregon
- One of the most problematic additions to SB 857 is Replica wants access to the EMS Fund which is where we park the GEMT funds from CMS. GEMT is the only new money entering EMS in Oregon in my 35 years in this profession. The proposal of a quasi-governmental out of state organization who wants access to those funds is unfathomable. An unlimited ability to tax the member state for a nebulous unfinished set of regulations and rules? Not for Oregon.
- The Veterans Provision of the bill is only if the Branch of Service is a NREMT Certification Certified. Currently the Army and Air Force have access to NREMT and the Navy does not. No different than what Oregon already does for veterans and Oregon currently helps with reciprocity issues and has several different pathways to licensure in Oregon.
- It also should be noted that other Allied Health Professionals in Oregon refuted the idea of similar bills, Physicians, Nurses, Physical Therapists successfully opposed similar bills.
- No improvement in the Public's Trust or Safety, raiding established EMS Funds the Loss of State Control, no transparency of mission, non-existent checks and balances, No success in member states that are reproducible in Oregon, Approving an Out of State Commission with Taxing authority?
- REPLICA clearly removes our voice at the table
- REPLICA Does not solve State to State issues it is purported to fix. Washington State and California are not REPLICA participants. Idaho is in a paramedic crisis. A Pew Foundation study concluded the number one reason for the paramedic shortage is pay. Low wages, long hours and no retirement pushes potential paramedics to nursing, allied health trades and other occupations. The ability to cross state lines as a paramedic was not measured in the Pew Foundation Study.
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This EMS COMPACT is not made for Oregon. Your Firefighters ask the committee to keep Oregon's EMT's and Paramedics whole. No raiding of GEMT funds, Out of State control, unpredictable fees or assessments, Quasi-Governmental oversight, single party representation, and no proposed transparency

We would like to thank the Labor and Business Committee for opportunity to comment and look forward to any questions you may have

Respectfully Submitted
Karl Koenig
President
Oregon State Fire Fighters Council