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Written Testimony for the Record
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House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
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Thank you, Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. My name is Susan Bailey, and I am the President of the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT). I am also the Director of the Louisiana Bureau of Emergency Medical Services and part-time faculty at Columbia Southern University. Through my service in these positions and others throughout my career, I have become intimately familiar with EMS Operations and Personnel Management, Risk Management Practices, and Finance EMS Systems, and understand the needs of EMS. Thank you for your ongoing support of the EMS workforce.

Founded in 1975 and over 92,000 members strong, NAEMT represents our nation's frontline EMS practitioners, including Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and Paramedics, who provide critical, lifesaving services to communities nationwide, especially in rural, frontier, and other hard-to-reach areas. EMS is a distinct and essential service to the public and a fundamental component of our nation's healthcare and emergency response systems. I appreciate the opportunity to offer NAEMT's views as the Subcommittee formulates its FY2025 bill. As you focus on our nation's priorities – and I know there are many – I ask that you provide robust funding for the Rural Emergency Medical Services Training and Equipment Assistance grant program, also known as the SIREN grant program.

May 19-25, 2024, marks the 50th anniversary of National EMS Week. EMS Week celebrates the Paramedics, EMTs, and other EMS professionals who work diligently to care for

their patients and serve their communities in times of crisis. This year's theme is "Honoring Our Past, Forging Our Future." This theme reminds us of the proud history of our profession and contributions of EMS practitioners over the decades. However, it also underscores that we must stay focused on the road ahead: evolving, innovating, and ensuring that EMS has the support needed to continue to answer the call for help whenever and wherever it's needed. EMS agencies, Paramedics, and EMTs provide medical treatment and preventive care services in our communities every day. They provide care in the home, in remote rural areas, and in precarious environments where their own safety may be at risk to ensure every patient receives the care they need.

EMS agencies across the United States continue facing crisis-level challenges in recruiting and retaining personnel. EMS also faces challenges in delivering quality emergency response and service coordination, in part due to continued declines in primary care and hospital service availability, greater distances between healthcare facilities, and low reimbursement rates. In addition to the aforementioned difficulties, EMS agencies face ever-greater responsibilities, such as preparing for disasters and bioterrorism threats, supporting the needs of an aging population, and serving on the front lines of the opioid and fentanyl crisis.

Rural EMS organizations have disproportionately suffered from shrinking revenue streams and increased demand before the pandemic and now, especially as it relates to synthetic opioid overdoses, which have skyrocketed and do not seem to be slowing down. The result is, unfortunately, predictable: increasing workforce shortages as EMS personnel become increasingly burnt out, face declining compensation, and are constantly exposed to unpredictable and dangerous environments. While these challenges are not limited to one region, rural EMS organizations across the country are more likely to shut their doors, leaving their residents

without reliable access to local emergency medical services. Recognizing this landscape, in FY2023 and FY2024 your Subcommittee provided \$10.5 million and \$11.5 million for SIREN grants, respectively. I want to thank SAMHSA for holding a webinar in January of this year to help prospective applicants learn about the program, how to apply, and discuss program eligibility and other issues. NAEMT looks forward to continued collaboration with SAMHSA and HHS.

SIREN grants have provided much-needed funding to assist rural EMS agencies in procuring medication and medical supplies, recruiting and retaining personnel, increasing service levels from Basic Life Support to Advanced Life Support, and even replacing older ambulances with newer and safer models. Since the inception of the program in 2018, more than 100 awards have been made to rural communities to maintain, improve, or expand the level of emergency medical care provided to the residents of those communities – activities that were only possible with the support from SIREN grants. Demand for this program is increasing every year, and

To keep up with the ever-growing demand for the program, and to meet the significant needs of rural EMS providers, I respectfully request that the FY2025 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies bill include \$32 million for SAMHSA for the Rural EMS Training and Equipment Assistance (REMSTEAs) program.

On behalf of NAEMT and the EMS practitioners we represent, thank you for supporting those brave men and women who put their own lives on the line to provide critical health care services in your communities.