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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Griego DATE TYPED 2-16-05 HB _____

SHORT TITLE Emergency Medical Service Personnel Training SB 543

ANALYST Collard

APPROPRIATION

| Appropriation Contained | | Estimated Additional Impact | | Recurring or Non-Rec | Fund Affected |
|-------------------------|------|-----------------------------|---------|----------------------|---------------|
| FY05 | FY06 | FY05 | FY06 | | |
| \$540.0 | | | \$540.0 | Recurring | General Fund |

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

REVENUE

| Estimated Revenue | | Subsequent Years Impact | Recurring or Non-Rec | Fund Affected |
|-------------------|------|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| FY05 | FY06 | | | |
| \$540.0 | | \$540.0 | Recurring | Emergency Medical Services Fund |

(Parenthesis () Indicate Revenue Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Department of Health (DOH)

Department of Public Safety (DPS)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 543 appropriates \$540 thousand from the general fund to the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Fund to be used as follows: \$160 thousand for volunteer departments to provide education training to EMS volunteers and \$380 thousand to provide education and training to EMS personnel throughout the state. This bill contains an emergency clause.

Significant Issues

DOH indicates the cost of training EMS personnel has continued to rise as training courses become more technical and lengthy. Most rural EMS personnel have to travel to training, which is

both expensive and time consuming. Volunteers, who serve as the health safety net for large rural and frontier areas, are dwindling in New Mexico because of both the time and cost (often out-of-pocket) associated with volunteering as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT). Formal EMS training and education is accomplished mostly at approved post-secondary educational institutions.

The EMS Fund act provides vital operational funding for EMS services (ambulances and rescue squads) that helps support the costs to assure a rapid response to emergency calls for assistance and treatment/transport of patients. An increase in funds to support statewide EMS system enhancement would improve the ability to reduce the rate of injury death in the state, which currently is the highest in the nation. The EMS Fund presently is capable of meeting approximately 45 percent of the annual requests from the approximately 320 participating EMS services statewide. Most of the funding is used by EMS services to pay for the operating costs including vehicle maintenance and fuel, utilities, physician medical direction, supplies and equipment, and personnel training and licensing.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$540 thousand contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of any fiscal year shall not revert to the general fund.

DOH indicates the bill would slightly increase the workload for the EMS staff at the department. The costs associated with the increase would be covered through the existing 3 percent for administration, which would increase by \$16.2 thousand dollars if the appropriation were enacted. The existing DOH regulation implementing the EMS Fund would need to be amended to comply with the training and licensing provisions in the bill.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

DOH indicates the administrative implications associated with this bill can be covered with current staff.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

DOH indicates operational costs of delivering EMS have continued to rise and rural/volunteer EMS services struggle to pay these costs. Counties that operate EMS and ambulance services without a substantial tax base have difficulty in maintaining these services. In FY04 there were several EMS systems currently struggling to operate due to inadequate funding. The County Emergency Services Tax, which was enacted in FY03, is being used by several counties to provide funding to pay for EMS services and emergency dispatch services. This tax on gross receipts must be approved by the governing body and a special election by the voters, and may be in increments of one-sixteenth of one percent up to one-fourth of one percent.

If the bill is enacted, a special funding program for EMS training could be established through the EMS Fund regulations to pay for rural training and personnel licensing expenses. Part of the bill is the result of a resolution passed last fall from the New Mexico Municipal League's Fire Chiefs' Association. The resolution addresses the increased costs for rural EMS services for both training and licensure of personnel. It also emphasizes that rural volunteer EMS Services are not compensated for operations, except through the EMS Fund.

A 2002 study conducted by the DOH Injury Prevention and Emergency Medical Services Bureau revealed that EMS, in general, has seen a decline in the number of volunteers available in rural areas. It is also difficult to recruit and retain advanced level EMS providers in rural areas. This funding could help overcome some of the issues in recruiting and retaining volunteers, paying for training and licensing, and would free up some existing EMS Fund dollars to pay for operational costs, such as supplies and equipment.

In 2003, DOH's Emergency Medical Systems Bureau conducted an EMS Personnel Recruitment and Retention Study. The top two recommendations made thus far by New Mexico Health Resources Inc. were New Mexico must ensure an adequate supply of trained and motivated people to staff an EMS system that is losing personnel to age and to competing professions for young people, and an on-going recruitment and retention initiative should be initiated within every community, as well as by the state.

EMS in New Mexico has developed over the past thirty years into a well-organized safety net pre-hospital response network of about 350 EMS Services and 7 thousand licensed personnel. However, the system is extremely fragile in regards to volunteer personnel and funding to support operations, particularly in rural areas. DOH indicates the bill would provide help in paying for EMS training and licensing, and would enhance overall access, response and medical treatment to the people of New Mexico.

DPS notes it is supportive of any and all efforts to provide training for emergency medical personnel.

KBC/lg:yr