



# Report to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

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Maine Emergency Medical Services Stabilization and Sustainability Program

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This report is submitted pursuant to amended Resolve, LD 722 (Appendix A), directing the Department of Public Safety, Emergency Medical Services' Board to submit a report before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs on the status of funds in the Emergency Medical Services Stabilization and Sustainability Program, as established by the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 32, section 98, no later than January 15, 2026. The report must include the amount of funding received by emergency medical services training centers in the Maine Community College System and the status of any remaining funds not yet awarded to emergency medical services training centers. The joint standing committee may report out a bill to the Second Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature related to the contents of the report.

### **Executive Summary**

In July 2023, and in response to recommendations from two consecutive Blue-Ribbon Commissions on Maine EMS (Appendix B). The 131st Maine Legislature addressed a growing crisis in the state's emergency medical infrastructure by enacting 32 M.R.S. §98 (Appendix C) establishing the Maine EMS Stabilization and Sustainability Program. This historic \$31 million initiative was designed to prevent the collapse of essential EMS services, to increase the sustainability, efficiency and resiliency of emergency medical services throughout the State and ensure that all residents and visitors to the State of Maine continue to have access to high-quality out of hospital clinical care provided by the emergency medical services system. The program was strategically structured into two distinct phases to move the system from emergency triage to long-term viability.

The first phase, the Stabilization Fund, provided \$12 million in funding directly to transporting and non-transporting EMS agencies, as these entities were seen as most at risk of failure due to financial hardship. Funding was designed to support staffing and retention, training and equipment needs, capital expenditures, and initiatives that align with the "Plan for a Sustainable EMS System in the State of Maine - A Vision for 2035" (Appendix D)

The second phase, the Sustainability Fund, provides an additional \$19 million in vital funding for transporting and non-transporting EMS agencies, and includes 3-year grants for licensed training centers and regional councils. Funding was designed to support more regional collaboration, increased workforce and initial licensure training, enhanced training and clinical equipment access, additional hybrid and non-clinical offerings, larger portions for capital expenditures, and support for initiatives that align with the "Plan for a Sustainable EMS System in the State of Maine - A Vision for 2035."

### **Methodology**

This report draws on records maintained by the Office of Maine EMS, grant award documentation, and financial and program administration data from Maine EMS and/or the Maine Department of Public Safety. Data reflects program activity through the most recent complete fiscal quarter.

### **Legislative and Program Background**

The EMS Crisis in Maine is primarily the result of a long-standing history of underfunding and a transition from a primarily volunteer-based model to one that requires professionalized, 24/7 readiness. Historically, Maine's EMS system relied on the dedication of local volunteers, but as

community demographics changed and training requirements increased, the "volunteer-only" model became unsustainable. The Stabilization and Sustainability Program is designed to provide immediate relief and long-term structural support to Maine-licensed EMS agencies and the diverse communities they serve—from the state's urban centers to its most remote, "super-rural" zip codes. By focusing on these agencies, the program ensures that every Mainer, regardless of geography, maintains access to high-quality, professional emergency medical response.

During the 130th Maine Legislature, lawmakers established a Blue-Ribbon Commission to Study Emergency Medical Services in the State, by enacting Public Law 2021, chapter 749. The duties of this Commission were set forth in Public Law 2021, chapter 749 and charged the commission to examine and make recommendations on the structure, support and delivery of emergency medical services in the State; and to maintain communication and coordination with Maine Emergency Medical Services as defined in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 32, section 83, subsection 16-A so that Maine Emergency Medical Services was informed of the work of the commission and the commission was informed of the strategic planning work of Maine Emergency Medical Services. In July 2023, a second Blue Ribbon Commission to Study Emergency Medical Services in the State was established by Resolve 2023, chapter 99. The duties of this commission were set forth in Resolve 2023, chapter 99, and charged the commission to: examine and make recommendations on the structure, support and delivery of emergency medical services in the State; and maintain communication and coordinate with Maine Emergency Medical Services so that Maine Emergency Medical Services was informed of the work of the commission and the commission was informed of the strategic planning work of Maine Emergency Medical Services.

The Commission's recommendations centered on a \$70 million annual funding request to prevent the collapse of Maine's emergency medical services. The core strategy, Recommendation A-1, proposed a five-year, \$70m per year commitment from the General Fund to support existing ambulance services, emphasizing the use of federal Medicaid reimbursement matches, where available, to offset state costs.

To address the most critical needs, the commission advised immediate "crisis funding" of \$25 million for services at high risk of closure, alongside \$6 million for non-transporting agencies like fire departments.

These recommendations also prioritized a plan to maximize federal dollars by increasing MaineCare reimbursement rates to 140% of Medicare levels and establishing assessment programs for non-municipal providers. The fiscal recommendations were designed to alleviate the burden on local property taxpayers while ensuring that both transporting and community paramedicine services remain viable.

Structurally, the Commissions proposed a fundamental shift in oversight by bifurcating the Maine EMS Board. This reorganization established a specialized Maine EMS Licensing Board to handle personnel regulation, allowing the Maine EMS Board to focus exclusively on system-wide strategic planning and ensuring access for underserved areas. Additionally, the Commission advocated for long-term system resilience by requiring municipalities to develop formal EMS

delivery plans and calling for a permanent EMS Commission to collaborate with the existing EMS Board and the Office of Maine EMS. These efforts are complemented by focused public awareness campaigns and recruiting efforts.

The most recent commission submitted their report, with findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety in January 2024.

### **Stabilization: Phase 1**

Phase 1, the Stabilization Phase, is detailed in Ch. 25 “IMPLEMENTATING THE MAINE EMS SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM” of Maine EMS Rules (Appendix E)

Chapter 25 was implemented under emergency rulemaking and established the formal rules and procedures for administering Phase 1 of the Maine EMS Stabilization and Sustainability Program, authorized under 32 M.R.S. §98. Ch. 25 governs the allocation of \$12 million in stabilization funding to eligible emergency medical services (EMS) entities statewide. The program was designed as an emergency financial intervention to prevent the imminent failure of EMS agencies and preserve 9-1-1 emergency medical services for Maine communities.

### **Purpose and Scope**

The rule aligned the program with the legislative intent to stabilize EMS agencies at immediate risk of failure, either due to financial instability or workforce recruitment and retention challenges. Eligible entities include licensed transporting and non-transporting EMS agencies actively providing 9-1-1 services. Funding for the program became available on October 26, 2023, December 6, 2023, the EMS Board adopted an emergency rule authorizing Maine EMS to implement the \$12 million Stabilization component of the grant program. The Stabilization Grant Funding Program opened for applications on December 13, 2023, began awarding funds on February 12, 2024, and closed its application period on May 21, 2024.

The overall Phase 1 grant period concluded on April 30, 2025. The grant was structured as a non-competitive, front ended grant, meaning agencies could apply and receive funding as quickly as possible, and then make purchases. A team of Grant specialists were added and continue to support and administer the program. Training for applicants was developed, and the department was able to provide automated application and reporting links for service leaders to use.

### **Eligibility and Risk Determination**

To qualify, EMS entities had to demonstrate imminent risk through one or both of the following pathways:

- **Financial Instability:** Agencies with an operating margin at or below 10% of total revenue were deemed unable to finance daily operations and therefore eligible for stabilization funding. The rule establishes standardized methods for calculating expenses, revenues, and the valuation of volunteer labor to ensure equitable assessment across diverse service models.
- **Workforce Recruitment and Retention:** Agencies could also qualify based on insufficient staffing levels, with thresholds differentiated for volunteer/combo services and fully

paid services, using multi-year staffing data reported to Maine EMS systems. Applicants submitted current and prior fiscal-year financial statements, verification of recent provision of 9-1-1 services, and intent to continue service delivery.

### **Funding Allocation Methodology**

Chapter 25 of Maine EMS Rules created an allocation algorithm to distribute funds equitably while recognizing geographic and operational differences across the state. Key elements included:

- Minimum and Maximum Awards:
  - Transporting EMS agencies: \$15,000–\$200,000
  - Non-transporting agencies: \$5,000–\$50,000
- Rurality-Weighted Call Volume: Funding allocations were calculated using EMS call volume data adjusted by federally recognized rurality indicators, ensuring that rural and frontier communities—which face disproportionate EMS sustainability challenges—were appropriately prioritized

### **Allowable Uses and Accountability**

Funds could be used for activities directly tied to financial stability and workforce resiliency, including wage and benefit supplementation, clinical and leadership training, administrative support, limited capital expenditures, and initiatives aligned with the “Plan for a Sustainable EMS System in the State of Maine - A Vision for 2035.” The rule explicitly prohibited the use of funds for existing debt repayment or supplanting existing subsidies.

### **Oversight, Evaluation, and Reporting**

Applications were reviewed by a designated evaluation panel to ensure compliance with statutory and programmatic requirements. Awardees had to adhere to post award reporting requirements, document measurable impacts on agency stability, and submit a sustainability plan outlining how funded initiatives would be maintained beyond the stabilization period.

### **Results and Challenges**

184 out of 260 Maine EMS Licensed Agencies applied, and all the applicants were awarded through one of the available pathways, resulting in distribution of \$10.15m in funding to transporting and non-transporting agencies. As of the date of this report, 100% of the Phase 1 applicants have completed their projects and fully utilized their awards.

There were challenges in the roll-out of Phase 1, Maine EMS had a change in leadership early in 2024, the Grant team had to be hired, and internal workflows had to be designed, tested and automated. There was a wide variation in the types of financial documents that were submitted during the initial application process, and that delayed approval of some applications briefly while we requested additional information. Some of our agencies were without leadership during the application period and didn’t have a designated person to apply for the agency, some agencies did not want to request the full amount and unfortunately, some agencies chose not to apply.

### **Why this Matters for the Legislature**

The approval of Ch.25 under emergency rule-making, and successful completion of Phase 1 of the program demonstrated that the Stabilization and Sustainability Program is structured, accountable, and aligned with legislative intent. Balancing rapid financial relief with longer-term sustainability planning. It provides a transparent framework for protecting access to emergency medical services, particularly in rural Maine, while ensuring responsible stewardship of public funds.

### **Sustainability: Phase 2**

Phase 2, the Sustainability Phase, is detailed in Ch. 27 “IMPLEMENTATION OF EMS SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM” of Maine EMS Rules (Appendix F)

The second phase of funding is described in Maine EMS Rules Ch. 27. This rule was created under the normal rule-making process for Maine EMS. Ch. 27 was designed to sustain and support the previous efforts, and the EMS System as a whole. The addition of EMS Training Centers and Regional Councils, as well as the proposed distribution algorithm necessitated stakeholder input in the form of a series of Public Hearings. After the hearings were concluded, comments from the hearings, and from the public in response to the advertised public comment period were provided to the EMS Rules Committee- who made final recommendations for the Ch. 27 Rule that the Maine EMS Board approved.

### **Purpose and Scope**

The Ch. 27 Rule further aligned the program to sustain the delivery of EMS services across Maine and continue the task of creating a future ready EMS system for Maine. Eligible entities included Maine EMS licensed transporting and non-transporting EMS agencies actively providing 9-1-1 services, EMS Regional Councils, and Maine EMS licensed Training Centers. This Rules chapter was developed and opened for public comment from August 21, 2024, through October 15, 2024. In response to feedback received, the chapter was revised by the Maine EMS Rules Committee and reopened for additional public comment from January 14, 2025, to February 14, 2025.

The final version was subsequently approved by the Maine EMS Board and formally adopted February 25, 2025. The application period for Phase 2 funding opened on March 17, 2025. Post award reporting is on-going as of the date of this report, with nearly 25% of agency projects closed out. The Sustainability grant was also structured as a non-competitive, front-ended grant, meaning agencies could apply and receive funding as quickly as possible, and then make purchases. Phase 2 was structured to provide significant support for workforce recruitment and retention challenges. One-on-one follow-up and support continue to be provided by the grant team throughout the reporting process.

### **Eligibility and Risk Determination**

To qualify, the criteria for transporting and non-transporting agencies were the same, they had to demonstrate imminent risk through one or both of the following pathways:

- **Financial Instability:** Agencies with an operating margin at or below 10% of total revenue were deemed unable to finance daily operations and therefore eligible for stabilization funding. The rule establishes standardized methods for calculating expenses, revenues,

and the valuation of volunteer labor to ensure equitable assessment across diverse service models.

- **Workforce Recruitment and Retention:** Agencies could also qualify based on insufficient staffing levels, with thresholds differentiated for volunteer/combination services and fully paid services, using multi-year staffing data reported to Maine EMS systems. Applicants submitted current and prior fiscal-year financial statements, verification of recent provision of 9-1-1 services, and intent to continue service delivery.

### **Funding Allocation Methodology**

Ch. 27 of Maine EMS Rules utilized an identical allocation algorithm to distribute funding to agencies equitably while recognizing geographic and operational differences across the state. Funding for Regional Councils and Training Centers was stretched to a three-year grant term, to allow for a longer planning and collaboration period for larger scale efforts.

Key elements included:

- **Minimum and Maximum Awards:**
  - Transporting EMS agencies: \$15,000–\$200,000
  - Non-transporting agencies: \$5,000–\$50,000
- **Rurality-Weighted Call Volume:** Funding allocations were calculated using EMS call volume data adjusted by federally recognized rurality indicators, ensuring that rural and frontier communities—which face disproportionate EMS sustainability challenges—were appropriately prioritized
- The 4 Maine EMS Regional Councils were awarded a total of \$1m, to be awarded \$250k per EMS region over the next three years. This allowed for long-term planning and collaboration for larger scale efforts around regionalization of EMS Services. The focus in this section is on high impact training, high consequence infectious disease preparedness, regionalization support and quality improvement planning.
- Maine EMS Training Centers were awarded a total of \$7.5m, of which 4.2m for projects over a three-year period. This allowed for long-term planning and collaboration for larger scale efforts. Projects focus on shaping new programs, hiring new personnel, adding equipment and acquiring new technologies specifically towards expansion and access to EMS licensure and continuing education.

### **Allowable Uses and Accountability**

Funds could be used for activities directly tied to financial stability and workforce resilience, including wage and benefit supplementation, clinical and leadership training, administrative support, limited capital expenditures, and initiatives aligned with the “Plan for a Sustainable EMS System in the State of Maine - A Vision for 2035.” The rule explicitly prohibited the use of funds for existing debt repayment or supplanting existing subsidies.

### **Oversight, Evaluation, and Reporting**

Applications were reviewed by a designated evaluation panel to ensure compliance with statutory and programmatic requirements. Awardees adhere to post award reporting requirements. Our Grant team continues to offer support for agencies, and we have added our EMS Regional Managers as support for the Regional Councils and our Education Coordinator as the point of contact for training centers.

## **Results and Challenges**

231 out of 263 eligible Maine EMS Licensed Agencies applied to Phase 2, resulting in distribution of an additional \$10m in funding to transporting and non-transporting agencies. As of the date of this report, 23% of the Phase 2 applicants have completed their sustainability projects and fully utilized their awards.

There were limited challenges in the rollout of Phase 2, Maine EMS leveraged feedback from stakeholders and learning from Phase 1 to inform a significantly streamlined and automated application process. The Grant Team was already in place and connected with our EMS agencies, internal workflows were further automated. We followed up with agencies one on one, a small number of agencies did not request the full eligible amount, and some agencies did not apply.

## **Why this Matters for the Legislature**

The establishment of Ch. 27 Rule, implementation of Phase 2, and successful completion of Phase 1 continue to demonstrate that the Stabilization and Sustainability Program is structured, accountable, and aligned with legislative intent. Fundamentally changing the scope and scale of our workforce development pipeline, providing essential funding to our local EMS Regions, and continuing to ensure agencies are supported, regional collaboration is encouraged, and work force training is stabilized.

Balancing longer-term sustainability plans while continuing to meet the needs of a growing system will be the challenge for our communities and lawmakers on the road ahead.

## **Funding to Maine Community College Based EMS Training Centers**

Five of the Eight Maine EMS Licensed Training centers are imbedded in the Maine Community College System. Eastern Maine Community College, Kennebec Valley Community College, Southern Maine Community College, Washington County Community College and Northern Maine Community College.

After a thorough review of the final report of the Maine EMS LD 244 Education Subcommittee (Appendix G), the Rules Committee of the EMS Board recommended approval of the Ch. 27 Rule, and it was formally approved by the Maine EMS Board. The algorithm structures a performance and volume-based allocation to Maine EMS Licensed Training Centers, balancing the needs of larger and smaller Training Centers, all of which presented with significant needs. The Maine EMS Board, in approving Ch. 27, awarded a total of \$4.2m, out of \$7.5m in Sustainability funds to EMS Training Centers within the Maine Community College System. Consistent with the intent to stabilize and strengthen the EMS workforce pipeline, these investments support paramedic and EMT program expansion, simulation equipment, faculty development, rural training access, and student recruitment.

EMS Training Center investments play a critical role in regional workforce resilience, particularly in Maines rural areas where recruitment challenges remain significant. The 3 private EMS Training Centers, including one of our CTE programs, and 5 MCCA programs serve as the primary entry point for new EMS professionals statewide.



## **Program Impact and Outcomes**

Program investments have prevented multiple rural EMS agencies from suspending operations, supported staffing stabilization, improved agency capability, expanded EMT and paramedic training capacity, and strengthened regional coverage models. While full longitudinal workforce outcomes will require multi-year analysis, early indicators show improved agency solvency, increased student enrollment capacity, and expanded access to continuing education.

Funding provided through the Maine EMS Stabilization and Sustainability program has improved the delivery of EMS across Maine in countless ways, from the addition of training, purchase of modern equipment, enhancing community response to include Paramedics for the first time, to providing automated CPR devices.

*One of our agencies reported this funding had literally helped them save a life, by providing funding for a badly needed additional EMS crew. Their usual EMS crew was assisting another patient across town, when a call for a cardiac arrest came in. The additional EMS crew was available and able to respond to the scene immediately, and the patient was successfully resuscitated.*

This story is just one of many we have received that illustrate not only the impact of this funding, but the importance and timeliness of continued support for the Sustainability Program and the Maine EMS system.

## **Status of Remaining Unawarded Funds**

As of the close of the reporting period, Phase 2 is moving into a subsequent funding round (amounts detailed in Table 1 below) to support the continued distribution of funds in the Sustainability Fund.

Ch. 27 Rule details the order of subsequent funding, which is built to maximize utilization of the funding and support for agencies and training centers. Nearly \$6m will be awarded in the upcoming final funding round which is slated to open in February 2026. Project plans for regional collaboration projects, training capacity expansion, and larger system efficiency initiatives were submitted by applicants with anticipation of full funding of projects through subsequent funding rounds.

## **Legislative Considerations and Recommendations**

Even with this significant and impactful investment, it is likely Maine will continue to see EMS agencies struggle over the next 5-10 years with continued workforce shortages, funding and reimbursement gaps, sustainability concerns and regional disparities.

We are likely to see continued risks to EMS service continuity without continued support, long overdue increases in federal billing rates through CMS and reimbursement and recognition for community paramedicine programs.

Continuing and broadening the EMS Stabilization and Sustainability Program to acknowledge the true scale of need reported out from the previous two Blue Ribbon Commissions-continuation of funding through the established program direct to agencies for staffing, subsidy

to support work force redistribution to areas of lower saturation, growth of Training Center network, State funded EMS training, and increases to education support for the EMS Regions in the EMS Office would be one straightforward way to continue to support Maine EMS as we continue to forge the path to a sustainable future.

Maine EMS is uniquely qualified to lead this initiative, as its mandate is rooted in the Maine Emergency Medical Services Act of 1982. The Act specifically charges the agency to "promote and provide for a comprehensive and effective emergency medical services system to ensure optimum patient care." The State of Maine recognizes that EMS is an "essential service" vital to the public health, safety, and welfare. As the central agency responsible for the regulation, coordination, planning, and evaluation of the statewide EMS system, the Office of Maine EMS is best positioned to implement the Committees' recommendations. By leveraging its statutory authority and mission to enforce baseline standards while encouraging excellence, Maine EMS provides the strategic oversight necessary to transform funding and Legislative support into a resilient and sustainable future for the state's first responders.

Table 1.

**Grant Funds Available Chapter 27**

<b>Transporting</b>	<b>Non-Transporting</b>	<b>Training Centers</b>	<b>Regional Councils</b>
\$7,515,600.00	\$3,292,400.00	\$7,500,000.00	\$1,000,000

**Grant Funds Applied/Awarded**

<b>Transporting</b>	<b>Non-Transporting</b>	<b>Training Centers</b>	<b>Regional Councils</b>
\$7,123,319.70	\$2,779,287.72	\$3,233,000.00	\$0.00*

\*Delayed until Feb 2026 for Regional Transition

**Total Sustainability Grant Funds for Subsequent Phase 2 Funding Round**

<b>Transporting</b>	<b>Non-Transporting</b>	<b>Training Centers</b>	<b>Regional Councils</b>
\$392,280.30	\$513,112.28	\$4,267,000	\$1,000,000

## **Appendices**

[Appendix A: LD 722](#)

[Appendix B: 32 M.R.S ss98](#)

[Appendix C: Blue-Ribbon Commission Report\(s\)](#)

[Appendix D: Maine EMS Vision Plan 2035](#)

[Appendix E: Maine EMS Rules Ch. 25](#)

[Appendix F: Maine EMS Rules Ch. 27](#)

[Appendix G: Response to LD 244 Resolve](#)