

MEARS, SMITH, HOUSER & BOYLE, P.C.

ATTORNEYS AT LAW
127 NORTH MAIN STREET
GREENSBURG, PA 15601-2403

THOMAS W. SMITH
KIM ROSS HOUSER
RICHARD F. BOYLE, JR.
KENNETH FICERAI
JON M. LEWIS
MICHAEL D. LAZZARO
MICHAEL S. RUSSELL
JOSEPH F. NICOTERO

OF COUNSEL: MARIA SPINA ALTOBELLI

www.mshblaw.com
khouser@mshblaw.com
jcolflesh@mshblaw.com
mdicks@mshblaw.com

TELEPHONE:
(724) 832-8700

FACSIMILE:
(724) 832-2245

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BRANCH OFFICES:

801 LIGONIER ST, LATROBE PA 15650
(724) 537-9036

ROUTE 259, BOLIVAR PA 15923
(724) 676-5500

915 PITTSBURGH ST, SPRINGDALE PA 15144
(724) 274-7337

Committee Members
Senate Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee

In Re: Senate Bill 792-Regular Session 2023-2024-PA General Assembly

Dear Honorable Representatives:

I have attached my CV and credentials hereto. I bring a unique perspective to this proposed Bill and its impact on the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the emergency services of Pennsylvania. I was one of the original formation organizers of the PA Task Force 1. I was a Member of that team until I retired in 2017. I am currently an Assistant Chief in the City of Greensburg for the last 15 years. I am a Team Member of the Region 13 PA Strike Team (western end of the State US&R), and the PA Hart helicopter rescue team. I also represent a multitude of Pennsylvania Fire Companies and numerous EMS ambulance services as an attorney and/or consultant.

Pending Legislation. The impact of the pending legislation to fund and support two core locations for Pennsylvania Urban Search & Rescue Teams is a critical and great investment for the State. The based locations provide a multitude of major benefits to not only both sides of the State but to the entire State. The co-location to major population areas and large numbers of Fire Companies and EMS agencies is critically impactful. Both team centers become regional sources

of high quality Multi-Hazard operational responders and centers of training for every County... in every fire agency within commuting distance. These centers become vibrant core organizations allowing all baseline skilled rescue responders to acquire, maintain, and validate their advance rescue skill sets and the importance of being part of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania response system. I have personally observed and participated in numerous PA Task Force 1 US&R deployments, the (almost 20 yrs) of Western Pa's Strike Team real-time training scenarios, numerous swift water rescue operations. In each instance the impact of the Pennsylvania Urban Search & Rescue Program was the core of a very safe and efficient response of even local assets who have relied on their local persons being involved in the PA US&R Programs. This concept is not only cost-effective, but it has operational impact.

The concept of clustered resource centers/organizations of highly specialized personnel wrapped around specialized rescue resources saves billions of dollars for local municipalities and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Otherwise, the local fire and County EMS would be attempting and straining their local resources to: a) acquire duplicated highly specialized rescue equipment; b) spending significant time and money seeking highly specialized training with many of the hazards requiring all team members being equally trained; and c) would result in the multiplicity of significant costs of maintaining the necessary high-tech equipment hoping it does not become technically useless.

In short, funding the Western Urban Search & Rescue response group (Region 13 PA Strike Team in conjunction with the PA Task Force 1 located in the Philadelphia/Eastern part of the State) with a continuing commitment to targeted robust highly trained emergency service capability across the state is both cost-effective and will serve the citizens. If there are any questions, I look forward to Legislators or Representatives contacting me.

Yours very truly,

MEARS, SMITH, HOUSER
& BOYLE, P.C.

Kim Ross Houser

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