

February 5, 2025

Senator Jason Rarick
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Building
Room 3413
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Senator Rarick:

The Carlton County Board of Commissioners is sending you this letter to express its complete and unanimous support of the Cloquet Area Fire District's effort to obtain legislation that establishes annual fire and ambulance special district aid, and their request for bonding dollars to be used for facilities construction and upgrades.

The Cloquet Area Fire District (CAFD) is a forward-looking organization that was formed in response to the cost-sharing issue of providing ambulance service as well as the challenge of providing ambulance, fire, and rescue emergency services in greater Minnesota. Their efforts have resulted in an operationally sustainable organization that has combined administrations, operations, and training of four separate fire departments. For example, through this regional approach to public safety, the CAFD has reduced the fleet originally needed to provide coverage to the area by five large fire trucks. Additionally, these efforts have resulted in an Insurance Services Organization (ISO) rating of three (3) for the entire district, and, subsequently, lower insurance rates for all.

We as commissioners recognize that the CAFD plays a significant role in our County's public safety. With 24-hour, highly trained staff, and advanced life support ambulance intercepts throughout the region, the CAFD consistently responds to complex rescue and firefighting incidents as a support to surrounding fire departments. However, while their model is one of operational success, CAFD leaders do have concerns regarding the lack of funding available to ensure long-term sustainability (as an unintended consequence of forming a special district under current legislation is the lack of state funding support). As a case in point, these districts did not receive any of the \$300 million recently issued as public safety aid, and currently do not receive annual aid from the state to assist with operations or major capital expenses, such as facilities.

The Carlton County Board of Commissioners supports the efforts of the CAFD to obtain legislation that establishes annual fire and ambulance special district aid, as well as their request for bonding dollars to be used for facilities construction and upgrades. It is imperative that State lawmakers recognize that ambulance and fire special districts provide solutions to many regional challenges regarding ambulance and fire emergency services, and that they honor that recognition by creating a pathway to ensure state funding is not withheld due to the lack of applicable legislation.

Sincerely, and behalf of the Carlton County Board,



Marv Bodie, Chairman