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To Whom it May Concern,

This letter is written in support of Marion County Paramedic Firefighters. As the Medical Director in Marion County for the past 20 years I have seen the impact that competitive wages have had on the men and women working for Marion County Fire Rescue. The decision to not increase wages in the past has had a significant impact on not only the care provided in the field, but also to the cost of recruitment, retention and overtime.

With the surrounding counties increasing their wages and hiring, I have significant concerns that history will repeat itself. During the worst years of the wage discrepancy I watched as Marion County Fire Rescue experienced significant loss of experienced paramedics. We became known as a training ground for paramedics that would rapidly gain experience here and then leave for higher paying positions in other counties, while performing the same duties. There were years when we were clearing over 70 new paramedics and at the same time losing over 80 per year to other counties. The results of the policy ended with significant overtime and recruiting costs to the citizens of Marion County.

Losing and having to replace experienced paramedics with new graduate paramedics is a big moral and liability concern. Placing inexperienced providers into life threatening decisions without supervision can be detrimental to lives and our community as a whole. A new paramedic is learning the skills necessary to provide high level care while still gaining the clinical experience to provide top level care that all of our citizens deserve. Without an experienced work force, the lack of mentoring from senior medics will be damaging to our county, department and paramedics.

Healthcare is an experienced based profession and prehospital care is no different. The liability of a new medic can be significant given the life-threatening nature of our 911 calls.

Experienced paramedics truly guide our system and require Marion County to maintain a competitive wage to ensure we don't again experience a loss of our work force.

Sincerely,

Frank A Fraunfelter, MD FACEP
Medical Director Marion County Fire Rescue