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Cc: Michael Colman <MColman@volusia.org>

Subject: Resignation for Paramedic Stone

To whom it may concern,

It is with great melancholy that I write to tender my resignation, effective immediately. Since March of 2017, I have served Volusia County EMS as an EMT, a non-lead paramedic, and as a lead paramedic. While this time has certainly taken its cost out of my body and my mind, I will never regret the years I have spent alongside so many incredible providers, serving the community that I have lived in since childhood. Indeed, when I went to EMT school back in 2013, I never once imagined working anywhere but Volusia County, as the white and orange ambulances speeding down the street will always be synonymous with EMS care in my mind. I had planned on retiring here, putting in my 25 years. I had my eye on an FTO position and maybe even Commander one day. Those dreams have withered, choked out by the constant waves of overworking, under paying, and outright disrespect at the hands of a Deputy Chief. While I can no longer hope to serve the community as I envisioned 5 years ago, I offer my experience as a token, hoping these words fall on receptive ears.

I have drafted this email many times in the past couple years, over three different EMS Chiefs, with varying contents and feedbacks intended for the service. Some of the grievances I wrote have since been corrected, others have only been worsened by the willful neglect of the upper management of this agency. I write this email for my own peace of mind, but also for the friends and family that are still employed with VCEMS. Much more importantly, I write this email for the family and friends that still reside in this county, as they may eventually find themselves in the back of a white and orange ambulance. Their care will inevitably be affected, and perhaps even dictated by, the mental and physical health of the providers wearing the uniform. I will admit that the bias behind this email is the bias in wanting to see my family and friends receive the best possible care in their time of need.

As I stated, I have seen so many improvements in this agency throughout the years. Better equipment, a full CCT program, modern protocols and uniform policy, tuition assistance, BLS programs and expanded promotion options. Faced with the immeasurable challenge of COVID-19, I am proud to say that we survived, with the support of our road supervisors and, even more so, each other. I cannot understate how much this agency has made great strides under the leadership of Chiefs Brady and Colman, and interim Chief Pozo. The contents of this email are not meant to discount the hard work of these leaders, nor are they meant to discredit the hard work of the road crews and road supervisors. I believe that every positive stride that we have made is a direct result of the road crews, ASTs, road supervisors, clinical staff and EMS Chiefs. This is not, nor will it ever be, an attack on the road crews or supervisors, but rather the persons ultimately in charge of that staff.

With this in mind, I would be remiss to leave out my grievances with this agency, and specifically with the office management staff and county council. Whether the readers of this email believe it or not, these exact grievances have been felt and spoken by nearly every single past and present employee of this agency. If they have not been spoken, it is purely out of fear of retaliation at their current or future jobs (I'll admit, I have the same fear sending this email.) It is my belief that, were exit interviews actually conducted in the last 5 years since the infamous exit interview of a Paramedic Maher, the county council and HR departments would have had no choice but to correct these glaring and dangerous deficiencies. Thus, since I doubt I will be offered an exit interview, consider this email to serve that role.

As the old saying goes: "actions speak louder than words." So, rather than list my grievances like some sort of middle school demerit card, I will instead interpret the actions of this agency towards its employees into the words we all hear. Everything I write here has been proven, year after year, email after email, notice after notice. These are both irrefutable and inexcusable. The format will go "We (Volusia County EMS) would rather (repeated negligent actions and policies) than (logical and positive action on behalf of the

employees.)

1. We would rather allow gas stations and fast food establishments pay a higher salary than we pay the people who respond to the 911 calls that very well could involve our families and friends, than pay them a living and respectable wage.
2. We would rather allow nearly every nearby EMS agency or hospital pay higher wages for EMTs and Paramedics than pay our employees a living and competitive wage.
3. We would rather allow dangerously overworked, underpaid personnel perform extremely dangerous medical procedures in the back of a speeding 30,000lb ambulance on our family and friends, than pay and staff better.
4. We would rather continue to demand mandatory overtime hours out of these dangerously overworked and underpaid employees, than increase staffing and hold accountable those who have failed to staff those ambulances effectively.
5. We would rather continue to employ a Deputy Chief of Operations who fails to meet nearly every performance metric of a manager (with the exception of shift-bid emails sent or hurricane plans haphazardly implemented), than staff that position with literally anyone else who is qualified and has demonstrated investment in the betterment of this agency.
6. We would rather continue to allow gross acts of negligence occur daily at the hands of apathetic providers than hold our own agency, or any of the neighboring Fire EMS agencies, to any measurable standard of medical care or ethics. (To this day I think the incident report I submitted about a firefighter saying we should "leave an overdose patient to die in the woods" rather than treat them was thrown away by whoever ultimately received it. I will not be elaborating on this incident.)
7. We would rather have a record numbers of employees use alcohol, pain killers and prescription anti-depressants to tolerate the tremendous physical and emotional demands of this position than allow off duty use of nicotine or medical marijuana.
8. We would rather continue to implement a woefully inadequate and disorganized clearing process that feels more like a lottery for new EMTs and Paramedics than a training and evaluation program, than implement a basic, standardized criteria that measures employees based on reasonable merit and performance over personality preference and knowledge of trivial policy.
9. We would rather pay every new employee the same amount, regardless of experience, than attract experienced and vetted providers from nearby agencies with sign on bonuses and experience-based starting wages.
10. We would rather spend millions training new employees weekly than use retention pay increases to reward the employees who have put years into this agency.
11. We would rather continue to staff virtually the same numbers of ambulances for the last ten years rather than increase the number of ambulances relative to the explosive growth of the county both due to housing

and tourism.

12. We would rather these ambulances take two to three times longer than any acceptable metric of response times to our family and friend's emergencies, than staff more ambulances.

13. We would rather ask employees who are faced with calls involving the deaths of family, friends and infants when they can go back in service, rather than give them the time and space to process their emotional anguish.

14. We would rather abuse and deny the rights of employees who are members of the military than retain and attract members of the community who already serve in such a noble fashion.

15. We would rather continually target and chase off experienced and passionate employees who hold management to a higher standard, than retain these employees and implement them to the betterment of the entire agency.

16. We would rather have a massive gap in tenure of our employees between "brand new" providers and the few remaining providers who have more than eight years with the company, than retain experienced employees for future leadership roles.

17. We would rather continue to punish the road crews with mandates, denial of partial shits and canceled vacations than implement literally any tracked system of accountability for the management staff who are directly responsible for staffing.

18. We would rather terminate the very first outside supervisor hire for being "too nice to the crews and too much like the other supervisor who is nice to the crews" than retain an over-qualified individual hired for the express purpose of bringing in a fresh perspective.

19. We would rather continue to ignore and abuse the Union tasked with representing the employees than seek its valued input and partnership in decisions.

20. We would rather punish employees who have children with near-impossible childcare decisions and the risk of termination, than staff appropriately and offer county sponsored childcare as a benefit to all employees.

21. We would rather continue to fail to perform exit interviews for any employee who resigns or moves from full time to intermittent, than field negative feedback that would risk the reputation and employment of the negligent management we continue to employ.

22. We would rather continually lose employees to the Fire Service and nursing school, or other agencies that allow nicotine and medical marijuana, than offer similar work-life-balance and pay.

23. We would rather continue to convince the employees that they are nothing more than a number, a warm body in a seat, than an individually valued member of the very agency that cares for our most vulnerable populations and dire needs.

24. We would rather continue to line the pockets of our most wealthy, than make even the smallest improvements to our employees lives and salaries even if that means a minuscule loss of profit or status.

I realize that there are many who will read these words with extreme resentment and disbelief. In response I will use yet another old saying: "put your money where your mouth is." Indeed, to anyone who read these words and protests and claims them untrue: prove it. Prove me and the dozens of employees who have said the exact words I have typed wrong. Prove that VCEMS is not the embarrassingly low paying, poorly managed, negligent and dangerous agency that I have described. If you succeed in proving me wrong, then the entire agency and County citizens and visitors will benefit.

Or don't, and hope that the day you or your family calls 911 they have an ambulance close by who is staffed by a fresh crew who is well paid, well fed and not overworked to the point of missing a vital sign, assessment finding or injury. You will find that Hope is, much like our wages and working conditions, a paltry response to the very real problems that affect every one of us.

To the road crews, including some of my very best friends and mentors throughout the years, I bow my head in honor of your incredible displays of kindness and competence on behalf of your fellow employees and patients. I cannot thank you all enough for the years of EMS room laughter, bed delay companionship, hard calls, and support that only a team like ours can offer. Please, I beg of you, take advantage of the mental health resources we have at our disposal. Please don't allow the panic attacks, nightmares, flashbacks and emotional fallout in your lives consume you. It is never weak to speak up and ask for help. Further, please continue to advocate for yourselves and your rights as employees. Talk to HR, make sure you're being heard. Don't let them smother you out of your dream career.

To the road supervisors, most notably Commanders Gorman, Matusek, Buslewicz, Ruth, Doublette, Wheeler, Cochran, Payne(s) and Fisher, I cannot thank you enough for being there for us, "boots on the ground." Your recent and continued picking up of road shifts reminds us that you 1) care what happens to us on the road and 2) understand the very real and rapidly evolving demands of VCEMS. I cannot overstate the morale boost we feel when we see you working a shift alongside us, for that is one less mandate, and one more chance you have to experience something that you will carry with you in your future actions as a leader.

To the ASTs who continually perform a job that I doubt I could myself, thank you for being the luxury that most other EMS agencies would only dream of having. You, more than anyone else in this agency, deserve a higher salary than the embarrassing compensation you receive for an incredibly difficult and thankless job.

To anyone else outside the agency who reads this email, I thank you for your time and attention and pray that these words will lead to an improved Volusia

County EMS.

Warmest regards,

Alexander Stone, NRP