



Susquehanna Regional EMS Council, Inc.

62 Lusk Street ▪ Johnson City, NY 13790

Ph 607.699.1367 ▪ Fax 607.634.4183

POSITION STATEMENT

Governor's FY2020 Executive Budget Request

Negative Impact on Public Health and Safety

The Susquehanna Regional Emergency Medical Services Council (SREMS) warns of the dire impact on public health and safety that the Governor's FY2020 Executive Budget Request (hereafter the budget) will have on Emergency Medical Services (EMS). The budget proposes that Medicaid co-payments for ambulance service be eliminated for those patients who are Medicare/Medicaid dual-eligible. This will result in an average 10% reduction of EMS agency revenue across our region.

"Ambulance services devote a majority of their resources to responding to emergency calls from Medicaid and Medicare patients across New York State. However, the state and federal reimbursements received from these calls are far below the cost of actually providing the emergency and non-emergency ambulance services. Recently, the state Department of Health's Medicaid Rate Adequacy Study Report found that ambulances across the state are underpaid \$31 million annually for Medicaid transports. In other words, every time an ambulance service answers a call for a Medicaid patient – whether it's an emergency call or a hospital to hospital transfer – they lose money." – United New York Ambulance Network.

As EMS is not a mandated service under NYS law, many of our ambulance services receive no municipal tax support. Therefore, their income is entirely derived from billing revenue. Eliminating the Medicaid co-payments will adversely affect nearly every EMS agency in our region. This reduction in revenue will directly and negatively impact the ability of ambulance agencies, throughout our region, to respond to emergency calls. There is a direct relationship between an ambulance service's revenue and its ability to put ambulances staffed with qualified personnel on the street. Costs such as salary/benefits, vehicles, equipment, fuel, insurance, housing, utilities, etc. are always increasing. Decreasing revenues will unavoidably mean decreased readiness and ability to respond.

This reduction in revenue, in an industry that is already underpaid, will lead to service cuts across the region. These cuts will mean longer wait times for ambulances and negative impacts on patient care. We anticipate it will also lead directly to agency closures – further increasing ambulance wait times. Additionally, it is possible that agencies will opt to not transport Medicaid patients. Compromising the entire health care system.

Restoration of Medicaid co-payments is critical to the survival of EMS in our region.

For further information, please contact the SREMS office.

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