

Hunter's Ambulance Service, Inc.

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February 27, 2015

Testimony of Donna M. Hunter, President, CEO
Hunter's Ambulance Service, Inc.

HB6824- AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS

Appropriations Subcommittee on Human Services, Friday, February 27, 2015

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Flexer and Representative Abercrombie and members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Human Services

Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony. I am President and CEO of Hunter's Ambulance Service. I am proud to say that our company is in its 51st year of providing ambulance and medical transportation in Connecticut.

My testimony is in opposition to ambulance budget cuts in HB6824- AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE.

Hunter's Ambulance provides emergency ambulance services to Meriden, Middletown, Berlin, Middlefield and Portland, and primary backup for the city of New Britain, and the towns of Wallingford, Cromwell and Durham. We provide ambulance transportation and medical care to residents of 40 skilled nursing facilities and directly to four acute care hospitals (MidState Medical Center, Middlesex Hospital, Hospital of Central Connecticut, New Britain and Southington), two satellite medical clinics, Marlborough and Shoreline, Connecticut Valley Hospital, Masonic Home and Hospital and Gaylord Hospital.

Ambulance services are uniquely different than other healthcare providers. First and foremost, we are regulated by the Department of Public Health and our rates are set by the department annually. We are statutorily required to respond to all 911 emergencies in our cities and town regardless of the patient's ability to pay. While we staff and equip our ambulances to meet the demands for the 911 call volume, nearly 20% of the [911 responses] result in no transport and therefore no reimbursement.

Specializing in Medical and Special Needs Transportation Services
Ambulance ~ Wheel Chair Vans / Buses ~ Student Transportation Vehicles

Concern for Others

Over the past four years ambulance services reimbursements by Medicaid were cut 10% in 2011, and 10% in 2013. Additionally, Medicare reimbursements were cut 2% on all ambulance calls and an additional 10% on ambulance dialysis transports. These cuts were not able to be absorbed and as a result, companies deferred replacement vehicle schedules, altered staffing patterns, and made other changes in an attempt to adjust. At a 50% reimbursement rate to cost, Medicaid as it stands today does not cover the ever rising costs of our labor, insurance, vehicles, and medical supplies.

Additionally, and equally important, the discretionary cuts of nearly \$100 million are of great concern to our industry. Compared to all other healthcare providers ambulance services are already funded substantially lower per cost of call and when compared to Medicare's reimbursement for the same type of call.

If this reduction were to be implemented, the net effect would be a diminished capacity of resources, extended response times, interrupted levels of services to our elderly, and would undoubtedly compromise the safety net of emergency medical services across our State.

I therefor respectfully request that you not support this proposed cut in Medicaid reimbursement to ambulance providers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donna M. Hunter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Donna" being the most prominent part.

Donna M. Hunter, President