



Association of Connecticut Ambulance Providers

Testimony of Greg Allard, President

Re: H.B. No. 6636 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING COVID-19 AND ENHANCED FEDERAL MEDICAID FUNDING.

Human Services Committee Public Hearing, March 25, 2021

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Berthel, Representative Case and Members of the Human Services Committee: My name is Greg Allard, and I am the President of the Association of Connecticut Ambulance Providers and Vice President of American Ambulance Service in Norwich. Thank you today for the opportunity to offer my testimony today regarding HB6636- An Act Concerning COVID-19 And Enhanced Federal Medicaid Funding.

We are in full support of the legislation and we appreciate your proposal to use the enhanced federal Medicaid funds to increase provider rates. We would encourage you to include all Emergency Medical Service ambulance rates.

In the past decade EMS Medicaid and Medicare rate decreases have caused significant financial hardships.

- In 2011, CT Medicaid reimbursement rates for emergency ambulance transportation were cut by 10% .
- In 2013, CT Medicaid reimbursement rates for non-emergency ambulance transportation were cut by 10% .
- Medicare reimbursement for ambulance services was cut 2% effective March, 2013 (sequestration) for all transports
- Medicare reimbursement was cut by 10% in October, 2013 on dialysis ambulance transports.

While other CT Medicaid providers may may have received even minimal rate increases during the past decade, ambulance providers have experienced rate cuts and no increases. CT Medicaid has not adjusted the ambulance mileage rate since 1998.

In addition to the above reductions which made it difficult for ambulance providers to make ends meet, the COVID pandemic has created additional unique challenges for Emergency Medical Service providers. EMS providers across the state have had to treat most individuals and trips as COVID presumptive cases and dealt with a much lower call volume created by a variety of factors. Unlike many other providers, there



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was no specific financial assistance offered to EMS providers and no ability to make up for those losses despite the significant cost increases and lower call volume.

EMS services are still critically needed but the healthcare system as a whole is relying on them less due to a substantial decrease in the volume of surgeries and other elective medical procedures, a decrease in 911 emergencies and a higher rate of patients refusing transport to hospitals. Despite the volume decline, costs for each transport increased during the pandemic.

Each call required a significant amount of vehicle sterilization time, additional expenditures associated with increased cleaning of our facility and a vast supply of PPE. Staffing was also an issue. With the random necessary quarantening of paramedics and EMT, we incurred additional costs of overtime for staff. Even now with vaccines increasing and virus numbers going down, the year-to-year call volume is still not at the prepandemic level.

Ambulance providers take a financial loss everytime we transport Medicaid patients causing more financial instability for our EMS providers. As the cost of each trip went up during the pandemic, the underfunding was exacerbated. Our members are Medicaid Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) providers and during the pandemic EMS providers stepped up and took COVID positive Medicaid patients to dialysis centers and other sites when other modes of transport were not equipped or trained to respond in the midst of the pandemic.

As EMS organizations we have required staffing levels dependent on our service area and we need the call volume to support the staff that are at the ready for emergency responses. While the Medicaid NEMT rate is not sufficient for these transports, significant reductions in NEMT transports increase our losses and challenge our ability to have staff available to meet our emergency transport obligations.

All Connecticut residents including, CT Medicaid enrollees, need to have a responsive, robust and stable EMS system as a critical service in our healthcare system.

We urge you to support Emergency Medical Services and increase Medicaid rates for EMS providers.



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Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony today.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory B. Allard
President, Association of CT Ambulance Providers
Vice President, American Ambulance Service, Inc.