

April 28, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for the assistance provided by your Administration and the Congress to address the financial impact of COVID-19. However, our frontline healthcare responders urgently need your additional help. As a result of COVID-19, responders across the country are facing extreme financial stress and our brave men and women are becoming sick from the virus. They are the first in harm's way but not one of the first in line for support, and that must change.

Our association represents the providers of vital emergency and non-emergency ground ambulance services and the paramedics and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) who deliver the direct medical care and transport for thousands of communities across the United States. They are fighting a lonely fight, and desperately need more help.

Everyday paramedics and EMTs are treating, transporting and testing potential COVID-19 patients. While the cost of providing ground ambulance services has increased sharply in response to COVID-19, the revenue has decreased providers maintain full readiness to combat the pandemic and continue to also provide 24-hour vital non COVID-19-related ambulance services, but with fewer transports.

The numbers tell the story. One industry survey found that more than 90% of services around the country report they have been financially hobbled by the crisis.

The cost of personal protection equipment (PPE), overtime pay, and other expenses directly related to COVID-19 are increasing. Our members respond to every call prepared as if the patient has COVID-19. However, in many instances, the medical care is only covered if the patient is transported to an appropriate facility. Government must be nimbler and ensure that our frontline healthcare responders are compensated for all of the healthcare services they are being asked to provide by public health authorities.

At the same time, there is a sharp decline in the normal response and transport volume as Americans stay at home and are reluctant to call 9-1-1 for non-COVID-19 medical emergencies and as hospitals delay non-elective surgeries and related medically necessary transports. Simply put, our members are facing increasing costs as they expend the resources necessary to address COVID-19, while their revenue across the board is decreasing.

In communities across America, patients rely on our members around the clock for a timely response to every call for help regardless of ability of the patient to pay. Our members need immediate additional financial relief to maintain current staffing and the resources to address the COVID-19 outbreak and ensure they can continue to provide vital emergency and non-emergency ambulance services today, and in the future.

As your Administration allocates already appropriated funds and considers additional economic stimulus legislation to address the impact of COVID-19, our association requests that you consider the below provisions.

- Protect paramedics and EMTs by directing federal agencies to provide them with higher priority access to PPE and COVID-19 testing. Paramedics and EMTs are too often not given primary access to PPE and testing even though they are frequently the first health care professionals to come into contact with COVID-19 patients. We also request that you advocate for tax relief for frontline healthcare responders and ensure that all governmental and nongovernmental responders are eligible for any additional essential worker compensation specific to the Public Health Emergency (PHE).
- Increase the percentage of the general allocation of funds under the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund (PHSSEF) for ground ambulance services providers and suppliers to equal a total of \$2.89 billion in funds for our industry. The \$2.89 billion reflects \$48,000 per ambulance with an estimated 60,000 registered vehicles. We greatly appreciate the recent payments under the Fund which will help with our current situation. However, the ground ambulance services industry is only 0.90% of Medicare fee-for-service annual outlays which resulted in \$270 million for our industry in round one of PHSSEF payments. This figure is disproportional to the large role of ground ambulance service providers and suppliers in responding to COVID-19 and our increased costs and reduced revenues during the PHE.
- Direct the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to reimburse ground ambulance service providers and suppliers for performing protocol-driven treatments in place during the PHE. This coverage will help limit the spread of COVID-19 by keeping patients with mild cases of COVID-19 at home and out of overcrowded hospitals or other facilities where they could expose others to the virus.
- Allow private for-profit EMS agencies to apply directly to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for Public Assistance program grants during the PHE and waive the matching requirement for emergency response providers. This will allow all EMS agencies to apply for financial assistance and for state and local governments to focus their limited resources on directly combating the pandemic.

Thank you in advance for continuing to help ensure that ground ambulance service providers and our paramedics and EMTs have the resources they need to continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and the funding to maintain the short and long-term viability of our operations.

Sincerely,



Aarron Reinert
President

About the American Ambulance Association

The AAA is the primary association for ground ambulance service suppliers/providers, including governmental entities, volunteer services, private for-profit, private not-for-profit, and hospital-based ambulance services. Our members provide emergency and non-emergency medical transportation services to more than 75 percent of the U.S. population. AAA members serve patients in all 50 states and provide services in urban, rural, and super-rural areas. As the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration identified in its 2013 report on emergency services, EMS-only systems – such as our members – provide the vast majority of emergency ambulance services throughout America.