

Appropriations Health Subcommittee

Request: EMS Funding

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Background

Emergency medical services (EMS) are a vital part of the healthcare system. There are several types of EMS providers ranging from government ambulance services to fire linked services, private ambulance services, and hospital ambulance services. Whether public or private, most EMS intersect with local government and directly affect local governments' ability to provide for the health and welfare of their communities.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, EMS providers and workers have endured a tremendous amount of strain which has resulted in workforce shortages and challenges in service delivery. EMS providers struggle to provide timely emergency medical care when there is a lack of available emergency medical technicians (EMT) or paramedics.

Providing emergency medical services is an expensive endeavor for both urban and rural counties. While EMS mainly operates at the local government level, a significant portion of funding decisions related to EMS happen at the state level. Items such as the current Medicaid reimbursement rate and the uses of ambulance license fees are determined by the state government.

ACCG believes that increasing the current Medicaid rate to the Rural and Urban Medicare rate; changing the rules and regulations to include Medicaid reimbursement for the first ten miles of ambulance transport; and utilizing the ambulance license fees will help address EMS workforce shortages and service delivery challenges.

Appropriations Request

According to a report put out by the Georgia Department of Community Health, there has not been a substantial rate increase to the EMS codes since 2002. Therefore, ACCG is requesting that the Governor and General Assembly appropriate **\$6 million** in funding, by using ambulance license fees or other sources, to increase the EMS Medicaid rate to the rural and urban Medicare rate, while additionally including coverage for the first 10 miles.