



ALASKA FIRE CHIEF'S ASSOCIATION

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www.alaskafirechiefs.org

February 13, 2018

Representative Adam Wool
State Capitol Room 412
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Rep. Wool,

I am writing on behalf of the Alaska Fire Chiefs Association in support of House Bill 176, an Act relating to medical assistance reimbursement for emergency medical transportation.

HB 176 will allow fire departments across Alaska recover some of the otherwise unrecoverable expenses related to providing emergency medical care to patients covered under the Medicaid system. Currently these additional expenses are absorbed by either the local government or the agency providing the medical care.

This program will not incur any costs to the State of Alaska; as administrative costs can be billed back into this federal program. This program is not part of the Medicaid expansion and is not dependent on the Affordable Care Act. This is part of an entitlement program that has been around for many years. Three states have completed legislation and several more are in the process of adopting legislation.

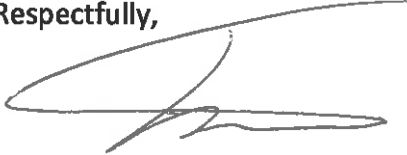
This program, if approved by the Alaska Legislature, allows EMS providers to bill the federal system annually for the approved costs. This will put real dollars back into our communities and allow departments the opportunity to survive during these fiscally uncertain times. These dollars could mean additional staffing, medical equipment, training, or as simple as heat and electricity in buildings. Your large municipalities could see large dollar amounts annually coming back to them. However the real difference will be the small communities that struggle just to pay for fuel in their ambulance. This program would make the difference between an EMS program barely surviving out of the generosity of volunteers to creating a legitimate program that can provide training to its members and purchase equipment that is not worn out as part of a surplus program.

The Alaska emergency services are seeing direct impacts of the low oil prices. Fire departments have greatly reduced participation in state wide programs. The fire Marshal's Office has closed offices and drastically cut the number of life safety inspections they do. Some of our communities cannot even pay to heat some of the community buildings any longer.

From the perspective of the Alaska Fire Chiefs, this program is a win, win for all of Alaska. This relieves some of the financial burden on the local community, it provides real dollars into a struggling EMS system, and it improves the medical care patients receive in the prehospital setting; all without costing Alaska any additional dollars.

We strongly support HB 176. This could be one of the most important pieces of legislation in decades to improve emergency services across the entire state. We would encourage you to support HB 176 as well.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jeff Tucker', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jeff Tucker, President
Alaska Fire Chiefs Association



ALASKA PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

PO Box 111222 ANCHORAGE, AK 99511

North Pole – Fairbanks – Shemya – Anchorage – Juneau – Ketchikan

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February 13, 2018,

Representative Adam Wool

State Capital Room 412

Juneau, Alaska 99801

Representative Wool:

I am writing today in support of HB 176 the Ground Emergency Medical Transport bill. HB 176 would allow fire departments and EMS providers to receive a higher rate of reimbursement for transporting patients covered by Medicaid. Currently fire departments and EMS providers are often reimbursed at a fraction of the actual cost for medical transports. HB 176 allows agencies in the state to begin to rectify this problem. At a time when cities across Alaska struggle to provide basic services, HB 176 will provide a level of financial relief by helping agencies receive reimbursement that is closer to actual cost.

Fire departments and EMS providers determine the cost of a medical transport and then bill accordingly. When a department transports a Medicaid patient they may only be reimbursed at a fraction of the actual cost. The difference between the cost of a transport and the amount reimbursed forces local taxpayers to make up the shortfall. HB 176 will allow providers of EMS to recoup expenses that are closer to the actual cost of the transport after departments demonstrate the accurate cost. This additional revenue can be used to bolster public safety in communities that receive it.

Many states have passed bills similar to HB 176 and are seeing an increase in revenue for transports related to Medicaid patients. At a time when our economy is struggling, we should look for ways to continue to fund vital services. HB 176 will help all communities across Alaska providing EMS.

In closing I would like to encourage the Legislature to pass HB 176. EMS is a vital service relied upon by the citizens of Alaska. The importance of this bill is magnified by the current economic situation in our state. HB 176 will help providers of emergency medical transport weather this economic storm and continue to serve the citizens of Alaska.


Thomas A Wescott

President Alaska Professional Fire Fighters

RESOLUTION NO. 4825

**A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 176, AN ACT
RELATING TO MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REIMBURSEMENT FOR
GROUND EMERGENCY MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

WHEREAS, the City of Fairbanks provides emergency medical services to citizens and visitors in Interior Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the City of Fairbanks receives partial reimbursement for the cost of providing emergency medical services to Medicaid beneficiaries; and

WHEREAS, the city of Fairbanks emergency medical service providers incur additional uncompensated costs when providing services to Medicaid beneficiaries; and

WHEREAS, Federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services provide supplementary reimbursement of uncompensated costs incurred by emergency medical service providers in the treatment and transportation of Medicaid beneficiaries in states participating in the Ground Emergency Medical Transportation program; and

WHEREAS, the Centers also provide reimbursement for the administrative costs associated with administration of the Ground Emergency Medical Transportation program; and

WHEREAS, the Ground Emergency Medical Transportation program is not part of any Medicaid expansion effort and is not associated with the Affordable Care Act; and

WHEREAS, enacting Ground Emergency Medical Transportation is a first step in facilitating implementation of the Ground Emergency Medical Transportation program in Alaska.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Fairbanks City Council supports legislation facilitating implementation of the Ground Emergency Medical Transportation program in Alaska.

PASSED and APPROVED this 5th day of February 2018.



Jim Matherly, Mayor

AYES: PASSED and APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA
NAYS: None
ABSENT: None
APPROVED: February 5, 2018

ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO FORM:


D. Danyielle Snider, CMC, City Clerk


Paul Ewers, City Attorney



Fairbanks Fire Department

1101 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, AK. 99701-4620
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fire@fairbanks.us



Jim Styers, Fire Chief

February 10, 2018

The Honorable Adam Wool
House of Representatives
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

SUBJECT: Support for Ground Emergency Transport (HB176)

Dear Representative Wool,

I am writing to you today in support of HB 176 the Ground Emergency Transport bill. HB 176 will benefit fire departments and EMS providers throughout the State of Alaska by allowing them to receive a higher rate of reimbursement for transporting patients that are covered by Medicaid. The current amount received for transport of a Medicaid patient does not come close to cover the cost to the transporting agency.

In 2017 the City of Fairbanks fire department transported just over 1,000 Medicaid patients. The uncompensated costs were over \$600,000. This uncompensated cost is placed on the local taxpayer. Passing of HB 176 will help cover most of the uncompensated cost. This additional revenue can be used to increase public safety within the City of Fairbanks.

With the State's current financial shortage, it's also having an affect on the City of Fairbanks financial situation. This year the City is losing several full time positions including one firefighter position. The fire department's run volume has increased 19% over the last three years. This increase in call volume has caused an increase in requests from area departments for assistance. Area departments are not able to continue giving this amount of assistance to the City of Fairbanks. They have started to turn down requests leaving citizens in need waiting for help they need. The additional revenue generated will go a long way in helping the City to respond to the increase and reduce the amount of mutual aid requested from area departments.

I strongly urge your support of funding the HB176, as this will help not only the citizens of Fairbanks but all citizens in Alaska.

Sincerely,

James N Styers
Fire Chief



Steese Volunteer Fire Department, Inc.

800 William C. Leary Lane

Fairbanks, Alaska 99712

Phone: (907) 457-3710 Fax: (907) 457-1512

Mitch Flynn, Fire Chief

February 13, 2018

Dear Representative Adam Wool,

Thank you for supporting HB176 that supports "GEMT" for Alaska's ambulance ground transport services. This bill allows public ambulance transport agencies to receive supplemental reimbursement from the Federal Government for ambulance transports. It provides the needed legislation to allow federal reimbursement funds to flow through the state and then back to public agencies that provide emergency ambulance and transports for qualifying Medicaid patients.

A single Medicaid payment provides an average of \$455 for each transport where the true cost to provide the service is close to \$1,100 per transport within the Fairbanks North Star Borough. This federal legislation will provide much of the balance shortfall we experience. Thank you for support in this legislation.

Respectfully,

Mitch Flynn, Fire Chief

Steese VFD

800 William C. Leary Lane

Fairbanks, AK 99712

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mitch.flynn@steesefire.org



February 1, 2018

Co-Chair Rep. Neal Foster
Co-Chair Rep. Paul Seaton
Alaska House Finance Committee
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: HB 176

Dear Co-Chairs Foster and Seaton:

I am writing in support of House Bill 176, an Act relating to medical assistance reimbursement for emergency medical transportation.

HB 176 will allow fire departments across Alaska recover some of the otherwise unrecoverable expenses related to providing emergency medical care to patients covered under the Medicaid system. Currently these additional expenses are absorbed by either the local government or the agency providing the medical care. I am told that HB 176, if adopted, will not incur any costs to the State of Alaska. This program is apparently not part of the Medicaid expansion and is not dependent on the Affordable Care Act.

If approved by the Alaska Legislature, HB 176 allows eligible EMS providers to bill the federal system annually for certain approved costs. The ability to do so will provide funding to our EMS departments. Those dollars could mean additional staffing, medical equipment, training, or as simple as heat and electricity in buildings. In the case of the City of Craig, the EMS annual budget of \$172,000 is offset by service revenues of approximately \$30,000. Efforts that allow the city to recoup additional service revenues from ambulance runs are sorely needed.

The City of Craig encourages you to support HB 176 as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Bolling", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Jon Bolling
Craig City Administrator

Cc: Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins