



Alaska Fire Chiefs Association

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Juneau, AK 99801

RE: HB 176 Support

Dear Representative Fansler:

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, 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,



Richard Etheridge

President