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EMS is on life support: Time to properly fund ambulance services in Michigan

Ambulance providers are only reimbursed for 10 to 25 percent of their costs

Lansing, Michigan – Michigan’s ambulance providers are sounding the alarm on inadequate state funding that has pushed EMS to the brink during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Michigan Association of Ambulance Services (MAAS) and the Michigan Association of Fire Chiefs (MAFC) today called on Governor Whitmer and the Michigan Legislature to properly fund EMS services, which haven’t seen a true funding increase in more than 20 years.

“The funding issues that EMS is facing aren’t new, but COVID-19 exposed the major flaws in the system and now it’s time to right this wrong,” said Jack Fisher, MAAS president and executive director of Medic 1 Ambulance in Berrien County. “This severe underfunding, combined with additional pandemic-related costs we have incurred, have pushed EMS to the brink. The answer is proper funding and we are asking our state leaders to prioritize EMS in the state budget.”

To properly support EMS in Michigan, MAAS and MAFC are calling for a \$10 million increase in state funding to bolster Medicaid reimbursement rates for EMS services. This increase is essential as:

- EMS base rates currently only average \$178 per life support transport, which doesn’t come close to covering the ambulances’ costs.
- The last rate increase paid by the state occurred in 2000 and EMS payments have been reduced twice since then.

“Michigan’s Life Support agencies are expected to respond to all medical emergencies, but aren’t being adequately reimbursed for their expenses,” said MAFC President Jeff Roberts, Chief of the Wixom Fire Department. “Our first responders have been on the front lines saving lives and putting their own health at risk during this pandemic. All we ask in return is the chance for proper funding so that we can continue to deliver high quality service to those in need in our communities.”

About MAAS

The Michigan Association of Ambulance Services is a statewide trade association representing and advocating for ambulance services. MAAS members serve 70 percent of Michigan counties and were responsible for more than 700,000 or 61 percent of ambulance transports in 2020. MAAS members also provide community paramedicine, ER diversion and 9-1-1 services in several areas of Michigan. For more information, visit www.miambulance.org.

About MAFC

The Michigan Association of Fire Chiefs established in the early 50’s to assist its members in their efforts to promote effective fire prevention and suppression, emergency medical services and other emergency services through education, technical and legislative means. For more information visit www.michiefs.org/MAFC

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