



February 19, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo
Ranking Member
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chairman Wyden & Ranking Member Crapo,

The American Ambulance Association (AAA), International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) and the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT) urge immediate passage of S.149 introduced by Senators Catherine Cortez Masto and Bill Cassidy, M.D. This legislation would remove a statutory barrier that has stopped ground ambulance service providers and suppliers from being reimbursed during the COVID-19 public health emergency for health care services they provide consistent with local emergency medical service (EMS) protocols.

Ground ambulance service providers and suppliers and our paramedics, EMTs and firefighters have been on the frontlines of the pandemic responding to emergency medical calls. They often are the first health care professionals that patients fighting COVID-19 encounter. In areas overwhelmed by COVID-19, community-wide EMS protocols have been issued restricting the transport of patients who can safely be treated at home to protect these patients from risking exposure to infection or infecting others, as well as to keep hospital beds open for higher acuity patients.

While these practices are standard nationwide, the Medicare program does not reimburse ground ambulance service providers or suppliers when they provide these health care services but do not transport the patient. Some ambulance service providers and suppliers have seen 30-40 percent of their emergency call volume shift to these treatment in place responses. Without reimbursement, the situation is not sustainable. Communities risk losing the very emergency medical providers and suppliers they have relied upon to help reduce hospital surge and decrease the infection rate.

S. 149 would address this problem by giving the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services the authority they need to waive the transportation requirement for reimbursing ground ambulance service providers and suppliers when responding to a 9-1-1 emergency call and a community-wide EMS protocol restricting the transport of the patient is in place.

Our organizations strongly encourage you to include S. 149 in the COVID-19 legislation currently being discussed to provide immediate and necessary relief to ground ambulance service providers and suppliers by allowing them to be reimbursed for the care they are providing.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Ambulance Association
International Association of Fire Chiefs
International Association of Fire Fighters
National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians
National Volunteer Fire Council