

Please Support S. 2971/H.R. 2354, the EMS Counts Act of 2021

Request

Please support S. 2971/H.R. 2354, the EMS Counts Act of 2021 introduced by Senator Robert Casey (D-PA), Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), Representative Susan Wild (D-PA) and Representative Fred Keller (R-PA). These bills would require the Secretary of Labor to revise the Standard Occupational Classification System by dividing the general occupational category of Firefighter into four sub-categories. Specifically, the bill directs the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to revise the broad description under the occupational series “33-2011 16 Firefighters” of the 2018 Standard Occupational Classification System of the BLS to include the following new occupations: (1) Firefighters. (2) Firefighter/EMTs. (3) Firefighter/Paramedics. (4) Firefighters, All Other. These changes will address the chronic miscounting of EMS personnel by allowing firefighters to identify themselves as cross-trained EMS practitioners.

Background

Emergency medical services (EMS) is an integral component of our nation’s response capacity to medical crises and public health emergencies, including outbreaks of diseases, bombings, mass shootings, and natural disasters. EMS consists of a diverse group of health care practitioners, including Paramedics, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), and dual role Firefighter/EMTs and Firefighter/Paramedics. These professionals respond to nearly 28.5 million 9-1-1 calls each year. Without correct data on the number of EMTs and Paramedics practicing throughout the U.S., it is difficult to meet the health and safety needs of our communities.

The BLS collects data on and releases a monthly jobs report, which includes job creation and loss information. Unfortunately, the Department of Labor’s current occupational classification system does not accurately classify firefighters who are cross trained as a paramedic or EMT. Given the fact that at least 62% of all fire departments provide EMS, this failure to recognize cross-trained fire and EMS personnel leads to a significant and chronic undercount of EMS personnel.

The BLS has not implemented recommendations from the Joint National EMS Leadership Forum (JNEMSLF), a coalition of 17 national EMS, fire and emergency medicine organizations, to change its data collection system in order to accurately count the number of firefighters who also serve as EMS personnel. Heeding these recommendations would enable the U.S. to track gaps in emergency medical services and meet the emergency healthcare needs of communities, including planning for daily needs and major disasters and public health emergencies.

As an example of the problem this creates, both the federal government and the National Academy of Medicine looked to BLS Data to determine how many COVID-19 vaccinations would be needed to inoculate all first responders. The BLS’ estimated that roughly 248,000 paramedics and EMTs serve in the U.S. whereas the true number of EMS personnel is over 1 million according to the [2020 National EMS Assessment](#). In this case, the BLS’ flawed estimate led to a dramatic shortfall in the number of doses actually needed to protect all EMS personnel across the nation. Congress must pass the EMS Counts Act and take steps to ensure incorrect data does not harm other areas of policymaking and funding decisions.

Contact

To learn more about S. 2971/H.R. 2354 or to co-sponsor, please contact Veronica Goodman in Senator Casey’s office at Veronica_Goodman@casey.senate.gov or Amanda Lincoln in Senator Collin’s office at Amanda_lincoln@collins.senate.gov. In the House, please contact Julia Cinquegrani in Representative Susan Wild’s office at Julia.Cinquegrani@mail.house.gov or Kevin.OKeefe@mail.house.gov in Representative Fred Keller’s office.