



March 23, 2020

Oregon Corona Virus Response Team:

Mercy Flights Inc. was founded in 1949 in Southern Oregon during the height of the polio outbreak. As a non-profit and as the only air and ground ambulance company in Oregon for the past 70 years, Mercy Flights continues to provide exceptional out-of-hospital care and transport to Southern Oregon and Northern California communities, responding to over 27,000 requests for service annually. This service is provided without *any* taxpayer subsidies.

We, as a member of the Oregon State Ambulance Association, are requesting that the pending telemedicine SPA includes allowances for an Advance Life Support (ALS) 1 base rate payment to ambulance services where a paramedic responds to a patient in their home, completes an exam and a corresponding consult with a qualified provider over phone or other means, but the patient remains at home without transport.

As we see case counts of COVID-19 continue to rise, we see the strain on our EMS system increase in tandem— as well as the need to keep patients in their homes and out of hospitals whenever possible. Paramedics stand to play a critical role in this effort, but need to be reimbursed adequately to provide these services—especially given the substantial resources required to respond to each call.

The OSAA estimates that response to a call like the above will take an hour or more from start to finish, and will require a two person crew and their PPE, an ambulance or EMS vehicle, dispatch time, as well as the regular necessary equipment. Additional crews on the ground are also necessary to cover other calls that come in while the extended response for a COVID-19 patient is occurring.

Additionally, since COVID-19 is following infections disease protocols, additional time and resources are needed after responding to the call to allow for thorough decontamination. These combined costs in equipment, personnel and time far exceed the normal course of business as well as the current rate offered for telemedicine community care.

Allowing the ALS1 base rate to apply will increase access to telemedicine services and will also serve to decrease the strain on our hospital system. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

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Mike Burrill Jr.

Chief Executive Officer

Mercy Flight Inc.