



## **Jefferson County Emergency Medical Services District**

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*"We are the Warmth of Promise"*

March 22, 2021

**TO: Rep. Rachel Prusak, Chair House Committee on Health Care  
Members of the Committee**

**FR: Chief Mike Lepin  
Jefferson County EMS District**

**RE: Support for HB 2910 with the -1 Amendment**

I am the Chief of the Jefferson County EMS District and a member of the Oregon State Ambulance Association. I would like to register my strong support for HB 2910 with the -1 Amendment.

The year of 2020 and the beginning of 2021 have presented real challenges to the EMS community like no other time in my 35-year career—from COVID-19, to wildfires, to winter storms. All of these emergencies have been exasperated by a longer-term, underlying issue—low Medicaid reimbursement for patient care. Due to the nature of emergency medicine, the negative impacts of low Medicaid reimbursement are felt statewide—but particularly so in rural Oregon, where our patient mix includes a majority of Oregonians on the Oregon Health plan, and where we have lower private pay to help offset high costs. Because of this, many rural agencies are barely scraping by.

The 2016 Legislature passed HB 4030 which allowed Oregon to petition CMS to participate in a federal supplemental payment program, called Ground Emergency Management Transport. At the time, the Legislative intent was that the program would be accessible to all kinds of EMS providers, public and private and OSAA supported this bill. Unfortunately, CMS only approved part of the Oregon program for public (fire department-based) providers. This program is now fully implemented and has provided greater reimbursement rates for our fire colleagues. It is now time to fully implement the intent of HB 4030 and ensure all providers have access to the stronger rates.

Thankfully, CMS provides an alternative, which is exactly what you have before you – a separate program that provides the framework to stand up a quality assurance assessment, which has been approved by CMS for non-public providers, in other states today. The state match is entirely provider-funded, and private participation in this program will not impact the GEMT program for public providers. By not participating in this program currently, Oregon is leaving federal money, that your EMS community desperately needs, on the table.

HB 2910 with the -1 Amendment is a critical step in creating a program that will increase Medicaid reimbursement for EMS providers who do not have access to other cost-recouping mechanisms, such as GEMT. In my area of the state, our agency provides billing services for smaller agencies like Fossil Ambulance and Spray Ambulance, and this program will be very helpful to these agencies and will increase access to services. All Oregonians deserve access to a robust and healthy EMS system. HB 2910 is an important step towards accomplishing this goal. I am thankful for Representative Nosse and Senator Findley for bringing this concept forward, and respectfully urge the committee to support HB 2910 with the -1 amendment.

Sincerely,

Michael Lepin  
Chief