ANNOUNCEMENT:

Call to Action: Contact your state Representative and Senator today!!

The following joint letter from the AAP and PEHSC was sent to all state legislators and the Lt. Governor's office this morning. In this unprecedented time and the legislative activity occurring, your legislators need to hear from you today!

Please contact your state legislator to let them know we need their immediate help! You can use this letter and change the first paragraph and signature to include your information OR you can use information specific to YOUR EMS agency but please use the bulleted list for consistency.

THANK YOU!

On behalf of the Ambulance Association of Pennsylvania (AAP), the Pennsylvania Emergency Health Services Council and the entire EMS community, please accept our thanks for your efforts to protect Pennsylvania citizens during this pandemic. We know that you and your administration are working tirelessly to keep everyone safe.

However, Emergency Medical Service (EMS) agencies are very anxious and concerned with the lack of direct financial support. We humbly seek your assistance in addressing this oversight as soon as possible. EMS is at a breaking point and we need government support. The continuation of and access to EMS care depends on it.

Across our State, in urban areas as well as small rural communities, EMS is serving on the frontlines of our nation's war against the COVID-19 pandemic, without the necessary supplies and equipment to ensure the safety of our patients, ourselves and our families. EMS is responding to calls specifically from patients with suspected or positively diagnosed coronavirus, in addition to 911 calls for patients with severe injuries and illness, including cardiac arrests, strokes and still unfortunately, the opioid crisis. All EMS systems, whether they are public, private or a combination of both, are struggling. The additional burdens placed upon our EMS systems and personnel are challenging even for the strongest municipal systems. In addition, EMS agencies have seen the near total loss of all non-emergency medical transportation requests; these are the principal funding sources for the majority of EMS agencies in the Commonwealth.
As stated, we lack medical supplies, particularly Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including face masks, gloves, goggles and gowns endangering our EMTs, paramedics, their families and colleagues and their patients. We also lack other essential medical supplies and medications. EMS personnel are having to utilize improvised or recycled PPE. A growing number of EMTs and paramedics are being infected with the COVID-19 virus, removing their ability to answer 911 calls. Some are fighting for their lives on respirators and unfortunately some EMS providers in our state have succumbed. Some states have implemented priority testing for their EMS personnel, but our State has yet to enact this testing.

Congress has passed crucial pandemic relief and stimulus bills in the last couple of weeks; we hope you will use some of this funding to directly support and sustain EMS in our State. EMS agencies receive little to no municipal, state or federal funding from programs such as the FEMA Disaster Relief Fund and the Assistance to Firefighter Grants. In many communities, EMS is on the brink of collapse without immediate relief.

For EMS to sustain its services and protect its personnel, we ask for the following actions to be taken immediately by you and your administration:

* Give priority access to PPE to EMS personnel.
* Give priority to testing for EMS Personnel and their families.
* Give priority access to EMS agencies for vital prehospital medications.
* Provide direct funding to all EMS agencies for costs related to PPE, disinfection and other needed medical equipment related to COVID-19.
* Reimburse all EMS agencies for overtime wages paid to employees and additional costs necessary to provide emergency medical services during the public health pandemic.
* Ensure all EMS personnel are covered in all applicable COVID-19 provisions by specifically including Emergency Medical Services Agencies and Personnel.
* Mandate that commercial insurance companies suspend copays for EMS services for COVID related treatment and/or transportation.
* Mandate that commercial insurance and Medicaid MCOs utilize existing base codes and payments levels for ambulances for treatment without transportation equivalent to those utilized when the patient is treated and transported which follows the national CMS guidance.
* Mandate that commercial insurance and Medicaid reimburse treatment and transport of COVID-19 patients to alternative destinations under Department of Health guidelines and Statewide EMS protocol which also follows the national CMS guidance.
* Provide legal protections to all EMS providers who are making sacrifices and exposing themselves every day to personal risks in order to treat and protect all Pennsylvanians.

* Provide an increase in the Medical Assistance reimbursement as the eligible beneficiary population will continue to grow while unemployment rises.

* Exempt EMS Agencies from the Governor’s Executive Order on "THE EFFICIENT ALLOCATION AND EFFECTIVE USE OF CRITICAL MEDICAL RESOURCES" for the commandeering PPE, medical or pharmaceutical supplies.

Please help us so we can continue to care for all emergency patients during this pandemic.

Thank you very much for your leadership during this state of emergency and public health disaster.

Sincerely,

Dean A. Bollendorf, President

Ambulance Association of Pennsylvania

J. David Jones, President

Pennsylvania Emergency Health Services Council