



LEGISLATIVE BRIEF: Strengthening Tennessee's EMS Network

Executive Overview

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is a mandated public safety pillar. Unlike other utilities, EMS must respond to every 911 call regardless of a patient's ability to pay or insurance status. Current federal regulatory shifts and inflation have created a "perfect storm" that threatens the stability of Tennessee's emergency readiness. The following bills ensure that EMS providers can remain operational, fairly compensated, and adequately staffed.

GROUND AMBULANCE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

SB2221 / HB2097

SEN. KEN YAGER / REP. JAY REEDY

- The assessment is a critical funding mechanism that currently generates approximately **\$30 million in federal funding** for EMS providers.
- This funding is drawn down using approximately \$10 million in revenue generated by the providers themselves.
- This program ensures the continued availability of supplemental payments that support the high cost of emergency readiness across Tennessee.

TENNCARE REIMBURSEMENT SHIFT IN FUNDING

SB1805 / HB1836

SEN. PAUL BAILEY / REP. MICHAEL HALE

- Ambulance services currently fund a portion of the state's share in federal drawdown dollars; however, federal law changes have now frozen provider taxes and directed payments.
- TASA seeks to shift the funding portion currently covered by providers directly to TennCare and the State of Tennessee.
- **Economic Impact:** This shift is projected to result in **over \$10 million** in increased funding for ambulance reimbursement.

NONEMERGENCY TRANSPORT SUSTAINABILITY

SB748 / HB201

SEN. KEN YAGER / REP. GARY HICKS

- CMS regulatory changes recently excluded nonemergency transports from provider tax assessments, leading to significant reimbursement losses for providers.
- Nonemergency transports are vital for hospital throughput; without them, the 911 system suffers from increased wait times and excessive call volume.
- **The Priority:** Adjust TennCare reimbursement for nonemergency transports to a sustainable level to preserve this essential service.

PATIENT PROTECTION & FAIR REIMBURSEMENT

SB1376 / HB1061

SEN. BO WATSON / REP. GREG VITAL

- TASA supports extending "Balance Billing" protections to ground ambulance patients, who were omitted from the federal No Surprises Act.
- Because EMS is a mandated service rendered before insurance verification, providers must be guaranteed proper compensation from payors.
- **The Priority:** Prohibit balance billing while establishing a **minimum reimbursement floor** that reflects the actual cost of lifesaving care.

EMS PROVIDER RETIREMENT RESTRUCTURE

SB2536 / HB2200

SEN. TOM HATCHER / REP. KELLY KEISLING

- Tennessee's retirement system (TCRS) already recognizes the hazardous nature of work for police, firefighters, and correctional officers.
- EMS providers face identical risks and physical demands but lack equivalent hazardous duty recognition in their retirement structure.
- **The Priority:** Update TN retirement laws to allow EMS providers to purchase hazardous duty time for prior eligible service, aiding in long-term retention.