



March 11, 2026

## Memo in Opposition

### Health / Mental Health Executive Budget Proposal Part M: Elimination of EMS Crossover Payments

The Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York, the NYS Association of Fire Chiefs, and the Fire Coordinators Association of the State of New York respectfully submit this joint statement in strong opposition to the above-referenced proposal contained in the Executive Budget.

The proposed elimination of the EMS “crossover” payment would have serious and far-reaching consequences for emergency medical services across New York State. The crossover payment ensures that ambulance providers receive reimbursement for the remaining balance of Medicare-approved services for patients who are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid. Under current law, Medicaid covers the coinsurance and deductible amounts not paid by Medicare. If this payment is eliminated, EMS providers will be limited to the Medicare reimbursement rate alone—rates that are frequently below the actual cost of delivering emergency medical care.

Fire departments throughout New York—whether volunteer, combination, or special district—play a central role in the delivery of EMS. Many departments directly operate ambulances, while others contract with municipal or not-for-profit providers to ensure community coverage. In most jurisdictions, EMS responses now account for the majority of total call volume. Ambulance transport and medical response are no longer ancillary services; they are a core public safety function.

Eliminating the crossover payment would significantly weaken an already fragile EMS system. The immediate impacts would include:

- Further reducing the already narrow operating margins of municipal and not-for-profit ambulance providers;
- Increasing financial strain on volunteer and combination fire departments that absorb EMS costs;
- Forcing greater reliance on local tax subsidies; and
- Threatening the long-term sustainability of EMS services, particularly in rural, suburban, and underserved communities.

In many regions of the State, dual-eligible patients represent a substantial share of ambulance transports. Removing the crossover payment would effectively shift costs to local governments, fire districts, not-for-profit ambulance corporations, and ultimately property taxpayers. This constitutes

an unfunded mandate at a time when local governments are already facing inflationary pressures, workforce shortages, and rising equipment and compliance costs.

The proposal also presents clear public safety concerns. EMS is a readiness-based system that requires 24/7 staffing, apparatus, medical supplies, training, and regulatory compliance regardless of reimbursement levels. Reductions in revenue directly affect staffing decisions, response coverage, equipment replacement schedules, and system reliability. Any erosion of financial stability jeopardizes response times and patient outcomes.

Emergency medical services are an essential and life-saving component of New York's public safety infrastructure. The EMS crossover payment is not a supplemental benefit or optional enhancement—it is a necessary element of sustaining a viable, community-based emergency response system.

For these reasons, the fire service respectfully urges the Legislature to reject Part M of the Health Article VII Bill and restore funding for the EMS crossover payment in the final enacted State Budget. Protecting this funding is critical to maintaining dependable emergency medical care for the residents of New York State.

Preserving EMS funding protects patients, supports first responders, and ensures that New Yorkers continue to receive timely, lifesaving emergency care when they need it most.