

# Professional Ambulance Association: Ambulance providers denied state assistance

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Paramedics and EMTs on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19 were denied access to \$100 million in federal CARES funding which was designated by Governor Evers for EMS and long-term health care providers which incurred significant unreimbursed costs related to the pandemic.

“We’re at a complete loss as to why EMS is always passed-over by State officials,” said Chris Anderson, President of the Professional Ambulance Association of Wisconsin (PAAW). “New personal protective equipment (PPE) and decontamination protocols have added over \$35 in supply costs per response yet most of us received zero from Wisconsin’s CARES Act funding. We cannot sustain current service levels without immediate assistance.”

EMS services were initially eligible for assistance from the State as part of Wisconsin’s nearly \$2 billion allocation from the Federal CARES Act. As the Department of Health Services developed the rules, support for local EMS providers was all but eliminated. “The largest ambulance service in Wisconsin received no state assistance despite expending over \$300,000 on additional PPE,” said Anderson. “We saw huge corporations getting CARES Act aid while the people on the front lines took another slap to the face. I cannot overstate the vulnerability of Wisconsin’s EMS infrastructure right now, even as we head into flu season and a possible COVID-19 resurgence in the Fall.”

EMS services were already in dire need. On average, Wisconsin Medicaid reimburses ambulance services significantly less than the average of four surrounding states (IL, IA, MN, MI) as well as much less than the already low

average Medicare reimbursement. “EMS needs permanent help right now to stabilize the system,” said Anderson. “We lose money on every Medicaid transport—the mobile healthcare that serves some of the most at-risk populations in our State. We have already seen one ambulance service discontinue participation in the city of Milwaukee’s 911 system due to the abysmal Medicaid reimbursement rates. This cannot continue or citizens will not get lifesaving care when it is needed the most.”

“EMS is proud to answer the call to care for our neighbors in need, day or night,” stressed Anderson. “We are essential to the pandemic response and risking our lives to help others.”