February 5, 2020

To Respected Officials and Trusted Friends:

We write to first express our appreciation for your participation in the Joint Legislative Budget hearing of January 29, 2020. For over eleven hours, through your legislative leadership, a spotlight was cast upon the important issues surrounding the distribution of Medicaid funds throughout our state. Countless respected speakers provided intuition and wisdom as to the implications and background of Medicaid spending in New York. Specifically highlighted was discussion regarding the Governor’s Medicaid Redesign Team (MRT), a team tasked with cutting $2.5 Billion from state healthcare spending.

Testimony from State Health Department Commissioner Howard Zucker and countless legislators included support for EMS representation on the MRT. However, a recently published memo from the Governor’s office naming the MRT members, alas EMS has ZERO REPRESENTATION on the MRT.

Medical emergencies strike patients of all ages, colors, genders, poverty levels, and occur in all locations, seasons and times of the day. The value of EMS cannot be understated, especially when minutes are so crucial to patient outcomes and survival. EMS agencies throughout New York rely on Medicaid funding, in some cases up to 50% of their operating budget.

EMS agencies across our state are presently closing at alarming rates. EMS in our rural communities finds itself in critical condition. As outlined by two recent studies, the 2017 Medicaid Ambulance Rate Adequacy Report and most recently the EMS Workforce Shortage survey (attached), any further cuts to Medicaid spending will lead to more closure. After a community faces an ambulance agency closure, they are faced with a dire reality where dialing 911 can result in a patient not receiving an ambulance.

The officers and directors of the New York State Volunteer & Rescue Association (NYSVARA), along with many of our EMS brothers and sisters were saddened and shocked to learn of our exclusion on the MRT. NYSVARA and patients throughout New York relying on the expedient emergency response from EMS providers would appreciate proper representation on the Medicaid Redesign Team. NYSVARA stands ready to serve in any capacity to work with the Executive and Legislative branches, as well as with our partner EMS Organizations such as the United New York Ambulance Network.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

Dave Meketansky
Co-Chairperson

Sean Graves
Co-Chairperson