

April 22, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20501

Dear President Trump:

On behalf of the leaders of paramedic agencies from across the United States, the National EMS Management Association (NEMSMA) is requesting the assistance of your administration in these unprecedented times as our paramedics continue to provide essential emergency medical care and ambulance transportation during this global health emergency.

As you have already heard from other prehospital professionals at the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT), the American Ambulance Association (AAA) and the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), paramedics have been at the forefront of this COVID-19 pandemic by responding without hesitation to meet the needs of our communities. Despite a severe shortage of personal protective equipment, lack of access to testing, exposures, quarantines, illness and deaths among our ranks, paramedics have been instrumental in “flattening the curve” of this pandemic’s trajectory.

During this heroic response, however, deep structural and preparedness flaws have been revealed in America’s Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system, which is made up a diverse collection of delivery models, including but not limited to, non-profit, municipal, and for-profit agencies. Paramedic leaders, while justifiably proud of the over 23,000 EMS organizations we lead across the U.S, operate mostly at the local level. As a result, our efforts are inefficiently coordinated and often funded at a subsistence level. While state-level offices to regulate and support EMS have existed since the 1970s, few have the authority and funding needed to prepare for or coordinate a large-scale interdisciplinary response. While our profession recognizes itself as the intersection of public safety, public health, and health care, we continue to be marginalized by all of the federal departments that oversee those functions who are represented by the Federal Interagency Committee on Emergency Medical Services (FICEMS).

Before we face the second wave of COVID-19 or a second national emergency of any kind, we need your help to accomplish the following:

1. Include EMS in future planning and distribution of equipment and supplies from the Strategic National Stockpile. To accomplish these, EMS organizations must be required to calculate the amount of material they would need during a major health emergency and

report that information to federal officials through State Health Departments as soon as possible to assure sufficient supplies are available later in 2020 and beyond.

2. Prioritize all paramedics and related EMS professionals to access and receive COVID-19 testing, treatments, and vaccines as they are made available to assure our ability to respond to the needs of Americans.
3. Ensure, through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), that any EMS organization, public or private, for profit or non-profit, that responds to requests through the 9-1-1 system or provides other services to local governments is eligible for, and included in, grant funding made available through the FEMA Public Assistance Grant Program after a declared disaster.
4. Ensure through the Department of Justice, that the family members of paramedics who are disabled or make the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty while fighting COVID-19 can quickly and efficiently access the benefits of the Public Safety Officer Benefits (PSOB) program. Furthermore, the administration must champion the reform of the PSOB Program to include death benefits for all EMS providers that provide emergency response services to the public despite being employed by a nonprofit, hospital, or private organizations.
5. Enhance the budgets of the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that executive-level federal leadership is in place within each agency that is supported by the essential staff necessary to ensure that each of these departments can effectively carry out their missions in support of paramedics throughout the United States. Currently, these agencies receive only nominal support for their EMS responsibilities, and the Federal Interagency Committee on Emergency Medical Services (FICEMS) is little more than a bureaucratic afterthought with an insignificant budget and little ability to effect change within or outside of the federal government. Worse than that, the nation's official EMS advisory group, the National EMS Advisory Council (NEMSAC), which the FICEMS relies upon for recommendations on all matters related to EMS, is woefully underfunded and understaffed.
6. Once we emerge from the current crisis, we will need the support of the White House to take a serious look at the funding for EMS in the United States. As recently articulated by our friends at the National Association of EMTs, even though paramedics are an essential service, they are often not officially recognized as such and are frequently forgotten when we discuss other first responders such as police officers and firefighters. Furthermore, many communities in the U.S., including some of our largest cities, choose not to provide any funding for paramedic services leaving EMS organizations to survive on the crumbs left by both private health insurers and CMS. Many suburban and rural communities must further rely on volunteers, bake sales, and bingo games to operate their services and buy equipment and ambulances. It is time for the federal government to establish EMS as an

essential service and develop permanent and sustainable funding sources for EMS in every community.

7. Finally, we urge you to support the full funding of all Advisories issued by the National EMS Advisory Council. Over the years, the NEMSAC has worked diligently to identify essential issues deleteriously affecting our nation's EMS operations and make thoughtful recommendations to address them.

Our association is grateful for your attention to the plight of our profession as we continue to move through the current COVID-19 crisis and beyond. We know that as Americans, we will emerge stronger from this crisis and are thankful for your support as we use this moment to help correct the structural flaws that limit the capabilities of paramedics across the United States.

Sincerely,

Brian LaCroix, President
National EMS Management Association

CC: The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader United States Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House U.S. House of Representatives

NEMSMA is a professional association of EMS leaders dedicated to the discovery, development, and promotion of excellence in leadership and management in EMS systems, regardless of EMS system model, organizational structure or agency affiliation.