



New York State Volunteer Ambulance & Rescue Association  
214 Kent Avenue #278, Endwell NY 13760

Phone: 877-NYS-VARA • Website: [www.nysvara.org](http://www.nysvara.org)

SERVING NY's EMS PROVIDERS AND THE COMMUNITY NOT-FOR-PROFIT  
& VOLUNTEER EMS SECTOR

## 2025 LEGISLATIVE & POLICY AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

The New York State Volunteer Ambulance and Rescue Association (NYSVARA), the United NY Ambulance Network (UNYAN), and our partners at the New York Association of Counties appreciate recent legislative and regulatory accomplishments to improve emergency medical services. However, after many years of inaction, we have much more to accomplish. EMS is at risk in many communities due to payment shortfalls and workforce shortages. EMS services are paid far less than it costs each time we treat a Medicaid recipient. The working EMS workforce has shrunk by 17.5% since 2019 and we need to reverse this trend to meet the needs of communities.

The NYS Executive Budget is an opportunity to make investments in emergency medical services to ensure that the system is sustainable into the future. NYSVARA has several recommendations for necessary investments in EMS that can be accomplished through the state budget and/or regular legislative process.

### ***Close the Medicaid Payment Gap and Increase Medicaid Rates for Ambulance Services to Cover the Full Cost of Delivering Care***

Medicaid ambulance payment rates are significantly below the cost of delivering care, which inhibits our ability to strengthen the workforce and maintain ambulance access for communities. The Medicaid Ambulance Fee Schedule should be increased to close the gap between Medicaid ambulance payments and the corresponding Medicare payment rate over the next three state fiscal years. NYSVARA recommends an incremental increase of at least ten percent in SFY 2025-2026. Once the gap is closed, the Medicaid fee schedule should be annually adjusted with a trend factor to cover the cost of inflation.

### ***Volunteer Incentives -- Support an Increase in the NYS Volunteer Ambulance Worker and Firefighter Tax Credit in the NYS Budget***

To support volunteer recruitment and retention, NYSVARA supports incorporating the following legislation into the NYS Budget for SFY 2025-2026:

- Income Tax Credit - S.7286 (Martinez) / A.7524 (Thiele) (Part CC, S.8309-A) - This legislation increases the volunteer firefighters' and ambulance workers' personal income tax credit

from \$200 to \$800 for eligible individuals and from \$400 to \$1,600 for eligible married joint filers. If the credit exceeds your tax for the year, any excess will be refunded without interest.

- Income Tax Credit and Property Tax Exemption - S.6630 (Mannion) / A.6274 (Barrett) - This legislation allows volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers to claim both the state volunteer income tax credit and the local volunteer property tax exemption. Currently an individual cannot claim the NYS tax credit if they receive a local real property tax exemption that relates to their volunteer service.

NYSVARA also supports community-based efforts to encourage adoption of the 10% local tax exemption for volunteer fire and EMS workers.

### ***Expand and Make Permanent the Two-Year Community Paramedicine Demonstration Program Beyond 2025***

The two-year community paramedicine demonstration program offers a proactive approach to health care, particularly for individuals with chronic conditions. By utilizing EMS providers to perform routine check-ins, assist with medication management, monitor vital signs, and support self-care activities, the program aims to reduce unnecessary emergency calls and hospital admissions. This is particularly valuable in rural areas, where health care resources are often limited. The data being collected by participating ambulance services shows promise in validating the effectiveness of this model, which could influence future health care policies and resource allocation decisions beyond its mid-2025 expiration date. <https://iroquois.org/collaborative-models-of-community-medicine-and-paramedicine/>

### ***EMS Workforce Shortage and Education – A Public Health Emergency***

EMS staffing in New York State is in crisis. This systemic EMS provider shortage is a threat to public health and requires aggressive public policy action. It is crucial that New York State's elected officials, public policy leaders, and health care system leaders are aware of the gravity of the situation and need to act. Aggressive action is needed to increase the number of active NYS certified EMS Responders by at least 10,000.

**A majority of New York State volunteer and career EMS agencies reported that staffing shortages impacted their ability to adequately serve their communities.**

**EMS Workforce Shortage in NYS: Where Are the Emergency Medical Responders --** <https://ubmdems.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Download-2019-NYS-EMS-Workforce-Report.pdf>).

**Where are the Emergency Responders: Update on the Workforce Shortage – 2023** [\(insert link\)](#)

- 1) NYSVARA recommends increasing NYS EMT and AEMT tuition reimbursement to cover the full cost of training a volunteer EMT/AEMT. The current EMT/AEMT reimbursement of \$950 should be increased to \$1,300. Recent SEMSCO course sponsor data shows an average cost per student greater than \$1,300. NYSVARA also supports expanding the marketing and availability of tuition-free EMT certification courses and full NYS payment for the Critical Care to EMT-P Bridge.
- 2) Increase recruitment and retention funding:
  - a) Each regional EMS program agency is slated to receive \$15,000 for recruitment and retention and the NYS Department of Health Division of EMS has between \$100,000 and \$150,000 available for similar purposed statewide initiatives. The regional monies have yet to be released by contract and need to be made available as soon as possible. In addition, these incremental efforts are small in comparison to the need and should be increased to the highest level possible.
  - b) Each regional program agency is slated to receive \$20,000 annually to sponsor the education of two Paramedics. The regional monies have yet to be released by contract and need to be made available as soon as possible. In addition, these incremental efforts are small in comparison to the need. We recommend the formation of the **Paramedics Across New Your Program** to sponsor additional education funding and sit alongside similar programs for physicians and nurses. Paramedic tuition can be subsidized through tuition waivers or loan forgiveness for students willing to commit to working as a Paramedic in New York State for a period of years.

## **Modernizing EMS Statutes and Regulation**

- 1) Updating the definition of EMS to more accurately define the role that emergency medical clinicians currently play in the NYS health care system and to support the capability for emergency medical clinicians to fill unmet needs.

"Emergency medical service" means a coordinated system of interoperable healthcare response, assessment, treatment, transportation, emergency medical dispatch, medical direction, research, and practitioner education that provides essential emergency and non-emergency care and transportation for the ill and injured and enhances preparedness and mitigates risks to the public.

- 2) The responsibility and accountability for assuring an appropriate EMS response must be assured in every New York Community. The essential nature of emergency medical services and other health care services delivered by EMTs and Paramedics should be established in state law. Make EMS an "Essential Service" by expanding the definition of EMS, recognizing EMS as an essential service, allowing special taxing districts to be created to fund EMS

services, and giving new responsibilities to the NYS Emergency Medical Services Council. [S.4020-C (Mayer) / A.3392-C (Otis)]

- 3) Assist not-for-profit ambulance services through a waiver of limited lab licensing fees and reduced barriers to point of care testing.

## **Support Legislation That Offers Incentives for Volunteer and Career EMS**

There are several bills proposed that would provide varying levels of incentives and benefits to volunteer ambulance workers and firefighters. With many volunteer ambulance services and fire departments struggling to recruit and retain members, incentive programs would support retention of these critical volunteers. Career ambulance workers struggle with low pay and would also benefit from these incentives. This includes:

- College or trade school scholarships and loan forgiveness;
- Cost-saving mortgage interest programs;
- Improved access to affordable health insurance coverage;
- Free access to state park and museums;
- no-cost fishing and hunting licenses;
- AEMT license plates; and
- private EASV and green-blue light improvements.

The NYS training stipends that are now being implemented for volunteer firefighters could be expanded to support the training of volunteer ambulance workers.

---

*NYSVARA represents, advocates, and provides a voice for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and emergency medical responders in the community and volunteer, not-for-profit sector. The association fosters EMS legislative awareness, education, networking and the exchange of ideas to enrich and enhance EMS and the public awareness of the valuable and unselfish contributions of community and volunteer EMS to the people of New York. The advancement of public policies that supports these EMS organizations and their activities is a crucial element of NYSVARA's fulfillment of that goal.*

---