



## SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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### NEWS RELEASE

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#### **Senate Democrats support rural emergency medical services**

*HB 4030 seeks to increase payments for emergency providers serving Medicaid patients*

SALEM – Oregon Senate Democrats today voted to pass a bill supporting emergency medical services funding throughout the state.

House Bill 4030 – which passed by a 29-0 vote – requires the Oregon Health Authority to form a workgroup of EMS stakeholders who will develop program recommendations for OHA to implement that will better reimburse providers of emergency medical services and transportation. Currently, the reimbursement rate for the care and transport of Medicaid patients is far below the cost of providing EMS, and the demand for these services continues to grow.

“This bill will help emergency responders in rural agencies provide critical services in their communities,” said Sen. Betsy Johnson (D-Scappoose), who carried the bill. “With the dramatic increase in Medicaid patients statewide, it can create a funding problem for those providers when they aren’t reimbursed enough to cover the cost of the services they provide. This bill helps to address that issue by increasing the amount paid to emergency providers for serving Medicaid patients.”

Oregon’s EMS system is made up of public sector providers – such as fire departments and fire service districts – and private sector ambulance companies. In certain jurisdictions, the current sub-par reimbursement rates for serving patients on the Oregon Health Plan can create fiscal

strain and hardship on Oregon’s public EMS system. This is particularly true for small districts and rural areas.

House Bill 4030 seeks to increase reimbursements to both public sector and private sector EMS providers who serve OHP patients. To achieve this, the bill directs OHA to amend Oregon’s current state Medicaid plan and implement two reimbursement programs, with the aim of leveraging federal match funds that will be used to provide increased payment — closing the gap between inadequate current rates and the actual cost of service — to public EMS providers and private providers contracting with a local government. The bill also requires OHA to convene a workgroup to weigh in on the programs and make further recommendations toward aligning these programs with Oregon’s Integrated and Coordinated Health care Delivery System goals of driving down cost and reducing unnecessary emergency medical care utilization.

“This bill will help EMS providers throughout the state and particularly in rural Oregon, which is home to many of our most vulnerable populations,” Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward (D-Beaverton) said. “Cash-strapped local fire departments and other providers serving small populations need to be reimbursed adequately – at least enough to cover the cost of service – for coming to the rescue when Oregonians need emergency medical attention. This adjustment will allow them to be funded for the critical work they do to save the lives of Medicaid patients.”

HB 4030 now goes to Gov. Kate Brown for signature.

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