



For Immediate Release

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Congressman Kim Introduces Bipartisan Legislation to Increase Support to Support Emergency Medical Services

WASHINGTON D.C. – This week, Congressman Andy Kim (NJ-03), along with Congresswoman Cindy Axne (IA-03), Congressman Al Lawson (FL-05), Congressman Marc Veasey (TX-33), Congressman Markwayne Mullin (OK-02), Congressman Mike Carey (OH-15), and Congressman Bruce Westerman (AR-4) introduced the bipartisan Supporting Our First Responders Act that would help emergency medical services (EMS) agencies with hiring and retention, training reimbursements, facility upgrades, and more.

“EMS responders are there when we need them, often first on the scene, and willing to put their lives and their families’ well-being on the line to help keep our neighbors and loved ones safe during an emergency,” said Congressman Kim. “Despite the glamor portrayed on TV, the day-to-day reality of responding to calls without the equipment and staff they need is a reality rarely seen by people in our community. With our bill, we’re taking steps to support our first responders by making sure they have the resources, staffing, training, equipment, and most importantly the mental and physical healthcare support they need. I’m proud to introduce this bill in a bipartisan way and hope my colleagues in both parties can agree that we need to strengthen our support for the brave EMS workers on the front lines every single day.”

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, fatality rates among paramedics and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) were highest across all healthcare workers at approximately 14 deaths per 100,000 workers during the height of the COVID pandemic. Together, the pressures of the pandemic and ongoing opioid and mental health epidemics, combined with low pay and/or poor benefits, have contributed to an overall 30% turnover rate of full and part-time EMTs and paramedics across the country.

These staffing shortages, combined with skyrocketing costs to purchase equipment and fuel, are forcing EMS agencies to make difficult decisions including whether to reduce or even cease operations. As more agencies shut down, remaining agencies are required to cover larger areas, leaving families without immediate assistance in their greatest moment of need when timing can mean life or death.

New Jersey is one of 37 states that does not classify EMS as an essential service. That means local governments are not required to provide these services at all. Unlike fire fighting and police, EMS units do not have wide access to federal and state funding.

To rectify that, the Supporting Our First Responders Act would:

- Authorize \$50 million per year for five years to establish a grant program under the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) which would allow public, private, and nonprofit EMS agencies that provide medical services to apply for grants to:
 - Hire, recruit, and retain trained medical personnel
 - Support the well-being of EMS personnel
 - Provide reimbursement for required training
 - Modify existing facilities
 - Purchase new equipment, medication, and vehicles
- Authorize \$5 million in technical assistance to assist EMS agencies with navigating grant processes
- Require the Secretary of HHS to provide Congress a report detailing the challenges, disparities, and inadequacies in providing federal and private reimbursement for EMS and recommend action.
- Require the Secretary of HHS to provide Congress a report detailing the challenges specific to rural EMS departments and to nonaffiliated EMS departments, then develop action plans to address those challenges through grants and other administrative action.

“I want to thank Congressman Kim for listening to the concerns of our local EMS agencies and introducing this bill. While many of our EMS agencies were struggling before, COVID-19 exacerbated our equipment and workforce shortages and we are now in a crisis,” said Jamie Woods, Chief of Lumberton, New Jersey EMS and

Vice President of NJ EMS Association. *"By introducing the Supporting Our First Responders Act which will provide the opportunity for greater funding to go directly to EMS agencies, Congressman Kim is allowing us to do the job we were trained to do and will save countless lives of his constituents and throughout the nation."*

"In rural Oklahoma, our EMS providers are often the difference between life and death, and ours are in a crisis," said Rep. Mullin (OK-02). *"Oklahomans cannot simply live without these safety net providers. And with no current federal funding stream for EMS, despite these heroes working day-in on the frontlines, our communities are abandoned. I am proud to support this bill to ensure those in Oklahoma continue to have access to high-quality health care."*

"Rural EMS teams go above and beyond to ensure that folks can get emergency care no matter where they live, and too often, they don't have the resources necessary to do their jobs," said Rep. Cindy Axne (IA-03). *"The Supporting Our First Responders Act will invest in these heroes so they're able to continue serving our communities, and I'm grateful to join my colleagues in this effort."*

"Ensuring our EMTs have every resource necessary to serve all communities as safely and effectively as possible is a no-brainer and I'm happy to join my colleagues in bringing forth the Supporting Our First Responders Act," said Rep. Carey (OH-15). *"This legislation will provide our EMS agencies with the ability to improve the lives of EMT's and the people they help every day."*

"The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of Emergency Medical Services (EMS), especially in rural areas, where access to health care services is minimal. These frontline workers risk their safety to provide a system of strong and coordinated emergency medical services," said Rep. Al Lawson (FL-05). *"The Supporting our First Responders Act is a bipartisan investment to ensure these organizations have access to adequate funding to hire and train the next generation of first responders and to purchase necessary supplies and equipment to provide health care services to all Americans."*

"Since the start of the pandemic, first responders like Emergency Medical Services (EMS) have been on the front lines fighting against the virus and saving lives. These essential front-line workers went above and beyond to ensure public safety. It is time we invest in them and bolster emergency medical services in America," said Rep. Marc Veasey (TX-33). *"The Supporting Our First Responders Act is a bipartisan piece of legislation that will provide federal support to first responders and help ensure they have access to the supplies and staff they need to better serve our communities."*

"Rural Emergency Medical Services providers are critical in countless communities across the country where local hospitals are not easily accessible to those in need of immediate help," said Rep. Bruce Westerman (AR-4). *"Rural health care has been neglected for too long. It is essential to ensure that EMS providers are equipped to deliver timely, high-quality care to every area in the United States. I am proud to cosponsor this competitive grant program to ensure those with the most need are provided the means to better serve those in crisis."*

The Supporting Our First Responders Act is endorsed by the National Association of EMTs (NAEMT) and the American Ambulance Association (AAA).

"Communities across the country are struggling to keep their ambulance services operating because of the crisis level workforce shortage," said Bruce Evans, President of the National Association of EMTs (NAEMT). *"Many services have had to close. We appreciate Congressman Kim and other Members of Congress working to address this crisis."*

"EMS organizations across the U.S. are struggling to hire paramedics and EMTs, and cover the increasing cost of equipment and supplies," said Shawn Baird, President of the American Ambulance Association. *"The Supporting Our First Responders Act by Congressmen Kim, Congressman Mullin, Congresswoman Axne, Congressman Veasey, Congressman Lawson, Congressman Westerman, and Congressman Carey recognizes the vital role that all ground ambulance service organizations play as medical first responders and would provide a critical down payment to grantees to help ensure their communities have access to vital EMS resources"*

“Our country’s emergency medical services (EMS) system is facing a crisis that threatens the ability to provide crucial emergency healthcare services in many communities,” said Rob Meriweather, President of Bound Tree Medical. “Bound Tree Medical, a leading nationwide distributor of emergency medical products to EMS, supports the establishment of this federal grant program to give our nation’s EMS infrastructure the support it deserves to address this crisis.”

Congressman Kim is a member of the bipartisan EMS Caucus as well as a member of the House Armed Services Committee, the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and the House Committee on Small Business.

About Congressman Kim

More information about Congressman Kim can be found on his website at <https://kim.house.gov/>.

About Sarnova and Bound Tree Medical

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