

May 8, 2012. My name is Kim Bobola. I am a former chair of the East County Citizens *Volunteer* Advisory Board. Tonight I am speaking as an individual. Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts on why I favor Bill 17-12 that establishes the ambulance reimbursement program.

Just last week, I attended the County's Volunteer Recognition Program for Volunteer Champions such as the late Roscoe Nix, Chuck Lyons, Ambassador Connie Morella, and other outstanding volunteers in Montgomery County. I left the ceremony in Bethesda and drove past the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Volunteer Fire House where the electric sign in the front flashed the message "No Ambulance Fee." In response to seeing this message after just attending the County's gala, I made a wish for a better use of our Volunteer Firefighters than campaigning against the passage of reimbursement legislation.

To the leadership of the county's Volunteer Firefighters' Organization, I say, as does a growing number of people including our neighbors in Prince William and Anne Arundel Counties, it's time to turn off that lighted sign, and turn your attention to being volunteers – for the good of the county budget, and in helpful service toward maintaining Montgomery County as the great place it is.

Stop this nonsense that people won't call for an ambulance. If it's an emergency, of course they will call, regardless of getting a bill. What it will prevent, however, is the abuse of our ambulance resources for non-emergency use created by uninsured people who use our hospital emergency care as their primary care provider when their only out-of-pocket cost is the tips they happily provide to the brave volunteers who took such good care of them during their free ambulance ride.

We're at a critical point in Montgomery County's budget history, and now have an important job as fellow volunteers in spreading the message on why the ambulance reimbursement program is a best practice for county governments, including our own.

First, anyone who pays federal taxes, and most of us do, already pays for ambulance service for those who receive Medicare and Medicaid. Most workers are discovering their health benefits also cover ambulance service. So, why should Montgomery County taxpayers pay for this same ambulance service when insurance companies, Medicare and Medicaid pay for ambulance service in other jurisdictions around us? The County Executive's bill will stop this.

Second, the County Executive can't simply decide to do this. He needs the Council to enact a law. Actually, such a law has passed twice, but was also overturned twice – due primarily to the campaigning efforts of Volunteer Firefighters – this last time by just 52% of the vote. The trend is that this bill will ultimately pass, so why put off the inevitable and why not start reaping the benefits of reimbursement?

Third, this bill has adapted to incorporate concerns that have been expressed by Citizens Advisory Boards around the County. Also, the County Executive's pending amendments make the bill more compassionate towards those who suffer financial hardship.

Finally, let's keep things in perspective. Healthy people rarely need an ambulance, and many of us won't ever use one over the course of our lifetime. For that reason, this reimbursement program is inconsequential as part of the big picture. Conversely, if you add up the reimbursement dollars you'd get by passing Bill 17-12, you'd find the reimbursement amount very consequential for a county strapped for money.

On behalf of many fellow volunteers, thank you.