

**Testimony of Eileen Cahill on behalf of Holy Cross Hospital
 before the Public Safety Committee of the Montgomery County Council
 in support of Expedited Bill #17-12: Fire and Rescue Service – Emergency
 Medical Services – Reimbursement**

May 8, 2012

Good evening, Mr. Chairman and members of the Public Safety Committee. My name is Eileen Cahill. I am the vice president of government and community relations at Holy Cross Hospital, and I am here tonight on behalf of Holy Cross in support of Expedited Bill #17-12.

But before I give the hospital's testimony I would like to make a personal comment, if I may: I know one of the arguments against passing the proposed legislation is that the voters decided against an EMS reimbursement program in 2010. I would argue that that the 2010 ballot question posed to voters was poorly worded, and therefore difficult to understand. As a voter myself and one who knew the issue reasonably well, I found the ballot question confusing. In the face of potentially more cuts in county services and/or increases in income or other taxes, one can only speculate how the voters would respond today to a properly-worded ballot question on an EMS reimbursement program.

Holy Cross Hospital has been on the record in the past in support of similarly proposed legislation. EMS reimbursement programs have been instituted in many of the surrounding jurisdictions, and we have yet to hear a compelling reason why an EMS reimbursement program should not be implemented in Montgomery County as well.

The main argument we have heard in opposition to an EMS reimbursement program is that it might deter someone who is uninsured or living on a fixed income from calling 9-1-1. If that were the case, the logic would follow that concerned residents would also avoid hospitals because of their inability to pay for hospital services. At Holy Cross Hospital, we have seen our charitable care program increase with each passing year. Thus, it does not appear to us that a person's insurance or financial status would be a deterrent to calling 9-1-1, when most times those calls result in a transport to a hospital emergency department.

Holy Cross Hospital is supportive of this expedited legislation because EMS reimbursement would only be sought from a patient's commercial insurance carrier, or Medicaid or Medicare, and that no county resident would be denied ambulance service because they lack insurance or the ability to pay for the service. Holy Cross would not be supportive of any legislation or any county-sponsored program that would deny its residents access to health care.

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Unfortunately, Montgomery County still struggles with the effects of a down-turned economy, structural budget deficits, and, more recently, costs being shifted from the state to the county. Leaving on the table potentially tens of millions of dollars in reimbursable charges for ambulance services seems irresponsible when our county continues to face difficult budget choices.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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