

COUNCIL APPROVES EMERGENCY MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT LAW

Council Vice President Nancy Navarro:

"I have never been philosophically opposed to collecting a fee from insurance companies that Montgomery County residents are already paying. I had serious concerns about the bill as introduced because it provided no protections for our most vulnerable residents who lack health insurance. The amendments offered by the County Executive and adopted by the Council provide a safeguard for low-income residents and those who lack adequate coverage. **With the addition of a Patient Advocate in the Office of Consumer Protection and a public information campaign, I am convinced adequate measures have been taken to strengthen this bill.**"

Councilmember Marc Elrich:

"Today the County Council took an important step toward securing a significant portion of the funding needed to insure that the County can meet the growing needs of our Fire and Rescue Service in the coming years. The fiscal situation these past few years has led us to cut many vital services, including removing seven Fire and Rescue vehicles from service. These cuts may increase response times and put our citizens at risk. We do not have sufficient resources to restore those cuts this year, and changes in state funding for the County in the coming years will make that even more challenging. **The decision to collect reimbursements from insurance providers is just common sense – our residents' insurance premiums already include those costs.** As we make the needed expansion of stations and service in areas with tremendous population growth in the past decade, this funding will help provide a safer, more dependable service for our residents.

"I requested amendments to the bill to ensure that these funds would be used to supplement and not supplant the base budget for Fire and Rescue in the coming years and this bill now accomplishes that goal, with funds going to apparatus, gear and training.

"Our volunteer Local Fire and Rescue Departments provide essential and generous service to County residents and we on the council will work hard to ensure that the passage of this bill will support them in their efforts, both operationally and financially."

Councilmember Valerie Ervin:

“Our Fire and Rescue Service is one of the County's most important assets. **The new proposal from the County Executive strikes the right balance between ensuring that our residents will not have to pay for ambulance service while capturing funding owed to the County from insurance companies. This will help reduce the tax burdens on our residents for years to come.**”

Councilmember Craig Rice:

“After careful consideration and conversations with my Councilmanic district residents, I am comfortable with today's outcome and my vote. **It is apparent to me that many voters were not clear that they, as County residents, would not be charged for this reimbursement nor would it impact insurance rates as was asserted by the EMS reimbursement's opponents.**”

Councilmember Hans Riemer:

“Our County government estimates that we are leaving more than \$17 million on the table by not charging for a reimbursement. **It is simply unfair to ask our taxpayers to pay for ambulances while we give insurance companies a free ride.**”

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