



## **HB 1263 Direct Payment of Ambulance Transport Fees**

### **Background**

Each year, thousands of residents are transported to local emergency departments by ambulance. Many of these ambulances are staffed by city fire departments and fire districts that, by code or policy, must transport these patients to the hospital. Many of the fire agencies charge for the transport, and are reliant on the revenue they receive.

### **Identified Problem**

**Increasingly, many insurance companies are paying the patient directly, instead of the transporting agency. This puts local fire departments in the business of having to act as a collection agency with their local citizenry. This is a problem that needs to be corrected, as the insurance industry should pay the transport agency directly without placing the citizen in the unenviable position of having to pay their local fire department as a “provider” of service.**

Some local fire agencies have tried to address this problem through the use of private collection agencies. This action realizes only a fraction of the original fee, puts undue stress on the patient who may have received the payment unknowingly, and leads to long term financial stress due to a poor credit rating.

Several states have chosen to take legislative action to address this issue. Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York and Hawaii have all addressed this through legislative action.

### **Purpose of Legislation**

Washington State should work with law makers to prevent direct payment of ambulance fees to patients. Ambulance fees should be sent to providers or to both the patient and provider. This will assure revenue goes to the correct party, avoids collection difficulties, significantly reduces abuses and stabilizes EMS transport revenues. This legislation will also prevent citizens from being turned over to collection due to confusion.

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