



Texas EMS Trauma & Acute Care Foundation

3400 Enfield Road
Austin, Texas 78703

February 12, 2010

Mr. Tom Suehs
Executive Commissioner
Texas Health and Human Services Commission
Brown-Heatly Building
4900 N. Lamar Blvd.
Austin, TX 78751-2316

Dear Mr. Suehs:

The Texas EMS, Trauma & Acute Care Foundation recognizes the challenges the State of Texas faces with a weakened economy. As budget reductions are considered by various state agencies we are especially troubled with cuts proposed to health and human services. Specifically, we are concerned with the proposed 1% provider rate cut in Medicaid that will impact Emergency Medical Services in Texas and the proposed \$5 million reduction per fiscal year in distributions to designated trauma facilities for uncompensated trauma care.

The Eightieth and Eighty-first Texas Legislatures allocated rate increases for Emergency Medical Services transports of Medicaid clients; however even with these rate increases, Medicaid reimbursement still falls well below the actual cost of providing services and remain below the rates paid by Medicare. These increases were the first rate increases provided for EMS providers since the 1990s. Reducing these now, by even one percent, will create funding shortfalls in communities all across Texas, especially in the rural, frontier and underserved areas where the local ambulance service may be the only access to healthcare available.

Proposed cuts to designated trauma facilities adds further insult to a fund dedicated in 2003 to trauma facilities and EMS. All funds from the Designated Trauma Facility and EMS Account 5111 have yet to be appropriated, some \$200 million at present, with \$75 million appropriated to its dedicated purpose for each year of the current biennium. Uncompensated trauma care costs provided by the 250 designated trauma facilities in Texas continues to hover close to \$200 million per year, with other provider costs including physicians, EMS providers and the cost of maintaining trauma designation not even considered into this calculation.

From paramedics providing both ground and air emergency medical services (EMS), to trauma physicians and nurses, as well as rehabilitation, injury prevention and acute care specialists, these health care professionals all work together to make the EMS, Trauma and Acute Care System in Texas the very best for all Texans. These professionals are ready to assist in a coordinated manner on a moment's notice – whether you are involved in a motor vehicle accident, experience a stroke or heart attack, are a victim of nature's fury or become ill from a pandemic flu. They treat patients first and seek compensation for their services long after the crisis is over. While we understand the difficulty in finding state budget cuts in health and human services, we urge you to at least maintain the current funding available to the Texas EMS, Trauma and Acute Care System.



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The Texas EMS, Trauma & Acute Care Foundation is an organization focused on further developing these systems in Texas for all Texans. TETAF welcomes continued dialogue on the budget cut discussions and would like to be a resource to the State of Texas in decisions that will affect the future of EMS, trauma and acute care in Texas.

Sincerely,

Dinah S. Welsh
Chief Executive Officer
Texas EMS, Trauma & Acute Care Foundation