

September 27, 2019

AN OPEN LETTER TO GOV. NEWSOM AND THE CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATURE: ACTION NEEDED NOW TO ENSURE CRITICAL FUNDING FOR EMERGENCY AIR AMBULANCES

Air ambulances save lives, flying thousands of missions to connect the sick or injured with emergency, trauma or specialty care. But without urgent action by the State of California, **these life-saving services and the Californians they serve are at risk.**

Approximately 70 emergency air ambulance helicopters and airplanes serve the state, covering nearly 164,000 square miles to serve more than 39 million Californians in their time of need. The state's most rural and vulnerable communities in particular depend on this emergency medical resource to quickly transfer patients to urban medical centers. This **medical transport ensures access to urgent, life-sustaining care** at neonatal centers and children's hospitals, burn units, trauma centers, and cardiac and stroke centers.

Air ambulances also play a **vital role in disaster and emergency response**, from car accidents to wildfires. During the 2018 Carr Fire in Redding, air ambulances quickly evacuated at-risk hospitals, including an entire neonatal unit where newborns and their mothers were receiving critical care. Injured firefighters and residents were also flown by air ambulance to burn centers to get urgent, life-saving care.

Current funding for these critical services comes from a fee on moving vehicle violations and is used to supplement Medi-Cal payments, which haven't been adjusted for more than 25 years and are inadequate to cover the cost of service. The moving violation fee expires Dec. 31, 2019.

If the State Legislature does not take immediate action to assure a new funding source, air medical bases across the state will be forced to close or cut back on the emergency services they provide, leaving a perilous hole in California's emergency readiness for all.

We call upon the Governor and State Legislature to establish a replacement funding source and update Medi-Cal rates to help cover the cost of service. Assembly Bill 651 (Grayson) does so while strengthening important consumer safeguards to ensure critical services are accessible to all Californians when they need it.*

NOTE: AB 651 was amended 9/9/19 to extend the moving violation fee until 7/1/20 to give the Governor, Dept. of Finance and Legislature time to address long-term budgeting when the short-term funding extension expires.

At a time when emergency preparedness is a top priority for California, it is imperative the state act now to fund air ambulances and the life-saving services they provide.

Signed,



Jeff Meston, President
California Fire Chiefs Association



David Rocha, President
California Metropolitan Fire
Chiefs Association



Steve Kovacs, President
Fire Districts Association
of California



Barbara Glaser, Senior
Legislative Advocate
California Hospital Association



Christian Giller, President
California Association of Air
Medical Services



Mira Morton, Director of Government
Relations, California Children's
Hospital Association



Alan F. McNancy, President
California Ambulance
Association



Todd Klingensmith, Executive
Director, California Paramedic
Foundation



Nick Karanopoulos, Fire Chief
Gasquet Fire Department



Bill Seline, Fire Chief
Truckee Fire Protection District



Lonnie Levi, Fire Chief
Klamath Fire Protection District



Michael W. Whorton, Fire Chief
Stanislaus Consolidated
Fire Protection District



Sean Grinnell, Fire Chief
Bodega Bay Fire
Protection



Bill Gillespie, Fire Chief
Crescent City Fire Protection
District and Crescent City
Fire & Rescue



Willie Sapeta, Fire Chief
Lake County Fire Protection
District



Ken Herbert, Fire Chief
City of El Centro Fire Department



Dominic Moreno, Fire Chief
Sutter Creek Fire Department



Monte Keady, Fire Chief
Burney Fire Protection
District



Mike Johnson, Fire Chief
Ebbetts Pass Fire District



Donald Wharton, Imperial
County Sheriff Reserve Unit



Erik Apperson, Sheriff
Del Norte County Sheriff's
Office



William R. Caldera, EMT-P/CEO
Manteca District Ambulance
Service/ Tuolumne County Division



Dean Dow, President and CEO
REMSA/Care Flight



Erin Yslas, Regional Director
PHI Air Medical



Jim Caryl, Vice President,
Customer Experience, West
Mercy Air



Brian Loveridge, Vice President,
Customer Experience, PacWest
SkyLife



Myron Smith, General
Manager, Hall Ambulance



Sean Russell, President
REACH Air Medical Services



Anna Blair, VP Service Delivery



Dan Brattain, President
CAL-Ore Life Flight



Vicky Spediacci, VP Aviation
Operations, CALSTAR Air Medical
Services



DeeAnn Dion, Chief Operating
Officer, Sierra Medical Services
Alliance



Marty Marshall, EMS Director
Enloe Medical Center



Mike Patterson, EMT-P, FP-C, CMTE,
Regional Director of Service
Delivery, American Medflight

Michael N. Baulch, RN, JD,
Program Director, Stanford
Life Flight

Carmel Angelo, CEO, Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
Jaison Chand, CEO, City Ambulance of Eureka
Dr. Adolphe Edward, CEO, El Centro Regional Medical Center
Mitch Hanna, CEO, Sutter Coast Hospital
Anthony McCants, Kier and Wright
Willie Sapeta, Fire Chief, Lake County Fire Protection District
Joel Schwartz, Administrative Officer, Copperopolis Fire Protection District
Ron Simpson, Smith River Fire Protection District
Donald Wharton, Mayor, City of Brawley
Altaville Melones Fire Protection District
American Canyon Fire Protection District
Arcata Fire District
Arcata Mad River Ambulance
Calaveras Fire Chiefs Association
Calaveras Consolidated Fire Protection District
Central Calaveras Fire and Rescue
City of Angels Fire Department
Mad River Community Hospital
Mokelumne Hill Fire Protection District
Mono County Department of EMS
Murphys Fire Protection District
Northern Inyo Healthcare District
San Andreas Fire Protection District
Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians
West Point Fire Protection District