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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rodriguez Advances Legislation to Supplement Medi-Cal Reimbursement Rates for Ambulance Transportation

(Sacramento) – Last night, Assembly Bill (AB) 55, authored by Assemblymember Freddie Rodriguez (D – Pomona), passed out of the Assembly Committee on Health with a vote of 15-0. This legislation would create a workforce adjustment to supplement Medi-Cal reimbursement rates for emergency and non-emergency ground ambulance transport.

“As a career first responder, I have watched the Medi-Cal reimbursement rate remain stagnant. Decades of below-cost Medi-Cal reimbursement have crippled the State’s ability to recruit and retain qualified EMTs and paramedics. AB 55 will enable providers to offer competitive wages, alleviating some of the difficulty surrounding recruitment and retention,” **stated Assemblymember Rodriguez.**

To qualify for the supplemental payment, ambulance providers must provide each employee with a base hourly wage increase. This increase must be at least 10 percent of that employee’s hourly wage from the previous year and each subsequent year by the percentage increase of the average maximum allowance established by the federal Medicare Program.

California’s ambulance Medi-Cal reimbursement rate has not been increased since 1999 and was reduced by 10% in 2013, never being offset in future budgets. The current rate is approximately \$111.48 per transport, ranking 46th nationwide. When adjusting for inflation, that rate is only about \$63. Comparatively, the national average reimbursement rate is over double California’s, at \$257.68.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports the median pay for an EMT is about \$17 per hour or \$36,000 per year – less than registered nurses, auto mechanics, and fast food workers. The Bureau estimates there will be 21,000 job openings as people leave for other occupations or retire.

“Our first responders should not be forced into choosing between a livable income and a job they truly love, where they can see the difference they make in people’s lives. Creating a workforce adjustment to supplement Medi-Cal reimbursement rates will provide livable wages for our first responders, ensuring the stability of our emergency and non-emergency ambulance transport infrastructure,” **added Assemblymember Rodriguez.**

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Assemblymember Rodriguez ([Twitter](#)) represents the 53rd Assembly District which includes the cities of Chino, Montclair, Ontario, Pomona, and Upland. He is Chair of the Assembly Committee on Emergency Management.