

Raymond Howard
Jonesport
LD 526

Good morning.

I am a family and emergency medicine physician practicing in Washington County (Machias and Jonesport). In addition to my practice, I am the medical director of a local EMS service.

Bottom line of this testimony is simple. The EMS services do not have enough funding.

These amazing individuals have spent years of their lives sacrificing their time, energy, money, family events, and their own health to provide services to their communities. They are overworked and underpaid.

The need for more funding has been there for years, possibly decades. This problem has been exacerbated by multiple factor over the last several years, including COVID-19 amongst others, and is now at a critical point.

From an ER doc standpoint, we see patients waiting DAYS for transport to higher level of care. Some specific examples from my own hours in the ER-

-A patient with massive pulmonary embolus on pressors and intubated, waiting in the ER for almost 36 hours waiting for transport.

-A patient in severe cardiogenic shock on multiple high risk medication drips, waiting for transport for almost 24 hours.

-MULTIPLE patients with femur or hip fractures having surgery delayed due to no transport to another facility.

These examples are just a representation of the burden on the system caused by underfunded EMS systems.

In addition to an ER physician spending more time and energy on very sick individuals, this bogs down the ER system, causing increased wait times and increased risks for delayed care and complications.

I am sure that multiple individuals will be sending testimony with similar examples. But I am not just an ER physician waiting for transport for patients. I live in the small town that my EMS serves. Not very long ago, my youngest child was home with my wife and had a choking episode. She called 911, and luckily the EMS was able to respond within minutes, was able to clear the airway, and all was well. I shudder at the thought of those parents out there that do NOT get a response that quickly, and have to watch their child die in their arms. This is what will start happening, and SOON.

Lack of EMS funding is NOT a tomorrow problem. It is a TODAY problem, and needs to be addressed, and adequately.

Thank you for making the right decision today to fund our EMS programs.

Raymond Howard, MD