Dear Colleague:

EMS systems around the country – whether they are public, private, or a combination of both – are struggling. The additional burdens placed on EMS systems and personnel by the ongoing COVID-19 crisis are extremely challenging, even for the strongest systems. Emergency Management Technicians (EMTs) and paramedics serving on the frontlines in urban areas and rural communities are often doing so without access to the supplies and equipment they need to keep their patients and themselves safe. As lawmakers it is our responsibility to ensure they, like our law enforcement and fire services, have the resources they need to be prepared and protected.

In its COVID-19 legislation, Congress has provided critical funding for hospitals and public health departments. However, because EMS systems occupy a unique position in our nation’s healthcare system, they have not benefited from these funds. In addition to expenses for personal protective equipment, overtime pay, and other medical supplies not covered by reimbursements from CMS or commercial insurers, many EMS agencies across the country are experiencing a sharp decline in medical response and transports as Americans are reluctant to call 9-1-1 for non-COVID-19 medical emergencies, and as hospitals have cancelled all elective surgeries and related medically necessary transports.

We invite you to cosign the attached letter to House Leadership to ensure that our EMS personnel have access to needed FEMA assistance so they can safely continue to serve our communities. Specifically:

- To amend the Stafford Act to enable all 9-1-1 medical responders to apply directly to FEMA for Public Assistance Grants beginning immediately, and for the duration of the public health crisis.
- Provide at least $5 billion specifically for EMS for this program.
- Waive the requirement for a 25% match during the pandemic response.

EMS’s role in this pandemic will continue to be intensive for the foreseeable future, and resources must be dedicated accordingly. Thank you very much for your consideration of joining our request.

If you have any questions or would like to cosign the letter please contact Jhostyn Duval at Jhostyn.Duval2@mail.house.gov with Congressman Albio Sires (D-NJ).
Sincerely,

Albio Sires

Member of Congress

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

First and foremost, we want to thank you for your leadership in enacting the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and other supporting legislation to combat the effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As Americans continue to weather this public health crisis, many people are facing unprecedented health and financial challenges – thanks to your hard work, the CARES Act and its companion legislation are helping to mitigate these hardships. As Congress continues to consider additional pandemic response legislation, we are writing to urge you to include direct support for our nation’s Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in the next pandemic response bill.

EMS systems around the country – whether they are public, private, or a combination of both – are struggling. The additional burdens placed on EMS systems and personnel by the ongoing COVID-19 crisis are extremely challenging, even for the strongest systems. Emergency Management Technicians (EMTs) and paramedics serving on the frontlines in urban areas and rural communities are often doing so without access to the supplies and equipment they need to keep their patients and themselves safe. As lawmakers it is our responsibility to ensure they, like our law enforcement and fire services, have the resources they need to be prepared and protected.

In its pandemic-response legislation, Congress has provided critical funding for hospitals and public health departments. However, because EMS systems occupy a unique position in our nation’s healthcare system, they have not benefited from these funds. For example, in its pandemic response work, EMS continues to incur extensive additional expenses for personal protective equipment, overtime pay, and other medical supplies that are not covered by reimbursements from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) or commercial insurers for patient transports. However, many EMS agencies across the country are experiencing a sharp decline in medical response and transports as Americans are reluctant to call 9-1-1 for non-COVID-19 medical emergencies, and as hospitals have cancelled all elective surgeries and related medically necessary transports. However, EMS must still respond to every 9-1-1 medical call prepared for a COVID-19 patient but is only reimbursed if the patient is transported to a hospital or another appropriate facility. Costs are increasing exponentially to address COVID-19, while total revenues are decreasing. The continuation of EMS care for patients in our communities depends on getting resources to EMS.

Therefore, we urge that Congress include specific assistance for EMS in the form of increased access to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance Grants. In the midst of this pandemic, we feel this is the most immediate and
effective way to distribute emergency funds to the EMS agencies and communities most in need. Specifically, to ensure that our EMS personnel can safely continue to serve our communities, we request the following:

- **To amend the Stafford Act to enable all 9-1-1 medical responders to apply directly to FEMA for Public Assistance Grants beginning immediately, and for the duration of the public health crisis.** This will allow all EMS agencies to apply for financial assistance themselves and for state and local governments to focus their limited resources on directly combating the pandemic.

- **Provide at least $5 billion specifically for EMS for this program.** Since EMS systems have not historically been recipients of significant funding from FEMA Public Assistance grants, the nature of the ongoing nationwide pandemic has substantially increased frontline EMS systems’ needs.

- **Waive the requirement for a 25% match during the pandemic response.**

In a typical disaster, EMS plays an intensive and critical role in the immediate response, but then the focus shifts to recovery. In this disaster, EMS’s role will continue to be intensive for the foreseeable future, and resources must be dedicated accordingly. Thank you very much for your consideration of your request and we look forward to working with you to include these provisions in the next pandemic response legislation.