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Michigan EMS providers ask Legislature to reimburse \$6 million in emergency costs for care provided to Michigan prisoners

MDOC health care contractor took advantage of Michigan EMS providers in 2023/2024

Lansing, Michigan – Michigan EMS providers are owed more than \$6 million in outstanding health care bills from the State of Michigan, after Michigan Department of Corrections former health care provider failed to pay EMS agencies for their services in 2023 and 2024.

EMS providers operating near Michigan's prisons provided emergency services to inmates in partnership with Wellpath, only to not receive payments for their treatment to patients. Wellpath's contract with the State of Michigan ended in April 2024 and Michigan EMS agencies have not been reimbursed.

"Michigan EMS providers deliver essential healthcare services to all residents in need, including those in Michigan prisons," said Angela Madden, Michigan Association of Ambulance Services Executive Director. "Wellpath's actions have caused financial hardship for several Michigan EMS agencies, making it more difficult to pay for staffing and operations that are essential to our communities."

During 2023 and 2024, Wellpath required the assistance of at least 15 EMS providers and did not reimburse the responding agencies for their lifesaving work. With the Michigan Department of Corrections replacing Wellpath as its healthcare provider, Michigan EMS agencies are left without reimbursement for \$6 million in claims.

After Wellpath informed EMS agencies of their inability to pay, EMS agencies are asking state legislators to take care of this injustice and reimburse the impacted agencies through a supplemental budget bill.

Under Michigan law, EMS agencies are required to respond to 9-1-1 requests including calls to Michigan's prisons.

"Michigan EMS providers are asking the Legislature to reimburse us for our work so that it does not impact the care we provide to our local communities," said Jeff White, chief of Richmond Lenox EMS. "At a time when EMS remains underfunded nationwide, this is a hit we simply cannot afford."

Michigan is home to 29,253 EMS providers, 798 life support agencies and 3,998 licensed life support vehicles, according to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Division of EMS and Trauma within the Bureau of Emergency Preparedness, EMS and Systems of Care.

The Michigan Association of Ambulance Services is a statewide trade association representing and advocating for ambulance services. In 2022, MAAS members were responsible for over a million ambulance transports, serving nearly 80% of Michigan counties. MAAS members also provide community paramedicine, ER diversion and 9-1-1 services in several areas of Michigan. For more information, visit miambulance.org.

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