



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

## Senate Passes Mayer Bill to Deem EMS as Essential Service

SENATOR SHELLEY B. MAYER May 31, 2024

| ISSUE: **EMS, FIRST RESPONDERS; ESSENTIAL WORKERS**

*(Albany, New York)* - The New York State Senate has unanimously passed legislation sponsored by Senator Shelley B. Mayer to deem emergency medical services (EMS) as an essential service.

Mayer's legislation, [S.4020C](#), also provides municipalities with the flexibility to ensure provision of emergency medical services; establishes statewide, regional, and county coordination; and provides for enhanced training and credentialing of practitioners, agencies, and educational institutions in the EMS field.

Under the existing framework for the provision of EMS in New York, private, public, and not-for-profit providers serve needs across the state in a scattered, patchwork approach. This leaves many New Yorkers uncertain whether an EMS provider will be available in their time of need. Creating greater flexibility for municipalities to facilitate EMS to meet unique local challenges represents a critical next step in the provision of these much needed services.

**Senator Shelley B. Mayer said,** "I am very pleased the Senate has passed this critical legislation to prioritize EMS and support the providers. We call 911 when we are in the midst of the worst moments of our lives, and we expect someone to be there for us. Thankfully, EMS providers show up every day to provide critical care. But as the EMS crisis continues, we face

the very real concern that one day, EMS may not be there when we need them. This bill is a step towards giving EMS providers the recognition and respect they deserve. I am deeply grateful for every EMS provider across the state and particularly for the leaders in Westchester, County Emergency Services Commissioner Richard Wishnie, and Deputy Commissioner Susan Spear, Port Chester-Rye-Rye Brook EMS Administrator Kenny Barton, and Rye Brook Village Administrator Chris Bradbury, as well as the New York Association of Counties, and so many others who care about the EMS community, for working together to acknowledge and protect our critical EMS services throughout NYS. Special thanks to my colleague Assemblymember Steve Otis for carrying this bill in the Assembly.”

**Assemblyman Steve Otis said,** “Our EMS Essential Service reform legislation will provide additional tools to improve existing programs, respect the variety of ways these programs are provided today, and enable communities to organize these life-saving services to shorten response times, enhance staffing, and make coverage available to all New Yorkers. The entire reform package is needed to address the funding, coverage, and service gaps we face today.”

**Westchester County Executive George Latimer said,** “I would like to thank Senator Shelley Mayer, and all of my colleagues in government for moving forward on passing the Rescuing Local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) legislative package. We have all seen rising costs coupled with heightened demand in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to undo pressure being placed on the brave EMS providers who service our communities. This legislative package will resolve a host of these issues, designating EMS as an essential service and ultimately improving health outcomes for our residents.”

**Westchester County Emergency Services Commissioner Richard Wishnie said,** “The passage of Senator Mayer’s legislation, S4020C to deem EMS as an essential service, as is Police and Fire services, is a huge step forward for members of the EMS community, as well as the people of New York State. For the first time in state history, when this legislation is signed into law,

there will be a guarantee of prehospital care for every city, town and village through special funding districts and a statewide comprehensive emergency medical system plan. Senator Mayer has dedicated herself to make this historical legislation possible, making her an EMS hero for those of us that have worked on this issue for decades. We will be forever grateful for the Senator's leadership!"

**Westchester County Department of Emergency Services Deputy Commissioner Susan Spear said,** "This legislation will designate EMS as an essential service, similar to fire and police. After dialing 9-1-1, there is an expectation that an ambulance will arrive quickly with well trained personnel. That's what saves lives. Senator Mayer's legislation will save lives. We are deeply grateful to Senator Mayer for both recognizing the challenges faced by EMS and for her leadership in sponsoring legislation to overcome them."

**Port Chester-Rye-Rye Brook EMS Administrator Kenny Barton said,** "The essential service designation is the critical and necessary first step in addressing the EMS crisis in NYS. Further, allowing the creation of 'special districts' between varying municipal entities will give much greater flexibility to those communities who are struggling to provide reliable EMS service by allowing cooperation to achieve mutual goals with their neighbors and better the delivery of care to the sick and injured throughout the State."

"With local EMS systems struggling under the weight of increased costs, workforce shortages, and high demand for increasingly complex services, the legislation passed today in the State Senate is a monumental step forward in ensuring these services are available to our residents in their hour of need," **said NYSAC Executive Director Stephen Acquario.** "By working closely with counties, EMS providers and professionals, and our partners in the legislature, were able to craft legislation that addresses the root causes of this crisis and provides counties with the authority and flexibility they need to fund this essential service. We applaud Senator Mayer and Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for their

commitment to ensuring that every New Yorker has access to fast, reliable EMS.”

**Chris Bradbury, Rye Brook Village Administrator said,** “In approving this legislation, the Senate has taken a huge step forward by recognizing EMS as an essential emergency service, and ensuring that reliable EMS response will be available to all residents in NYS. This legislation also provides a more direct path to create special EMS Districts, requires the development of more comprehensive statewide and regional emergency medical system plans, and provides support for additional training. I would like to thank Senator Shelley Mayer and Assemblyman Steve Otis for recognizing and confronting this EMS crisis head-on by drafting and sponsoring this priority legislation which will help EMS agencies and the public they serve throughout the state.”

View Senator Mayer’s remarks on the floor [here](#).



L to R: Senator Michelle Hinchey, Senator Monica Martinez, Senator Shelley Mayer (speaking), and Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins // Photo Courtesy of the New York State Senate Photography