



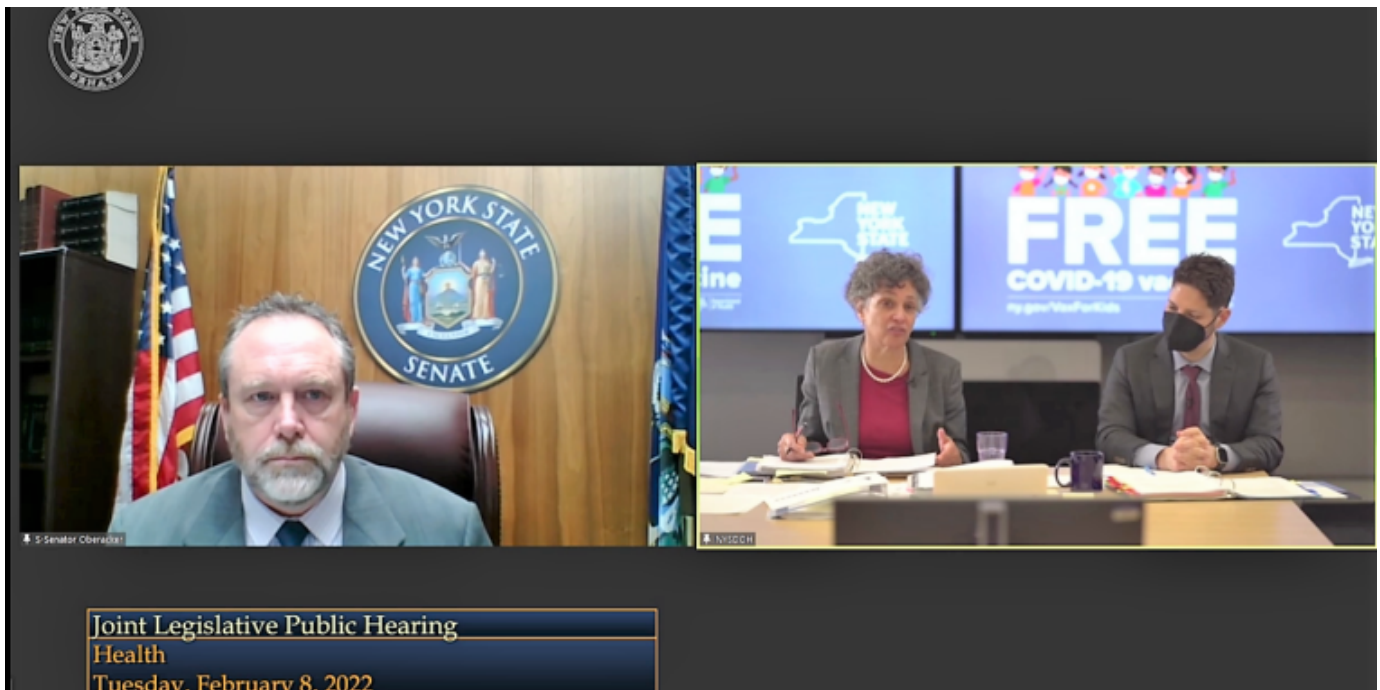
NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Peter Oberacker

## Senator Oberacker Questions Health Commissioner on Rural EMS Concerns

JEFF BISHOP, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR February 8, 2022

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**ALBANY, 02/08/22 --** State Senator Peter Oberacker (R/C-Schenevus) today questioned New York State Health Commissioner Dr. Mary Bassett during the joint legislative public hearing on the governor’s budget proposal.

Senator Peter Oberacker said, **“New York is contending with substantial health concerns – recovering from COVID, increased mental health demands, the ongoing heroin and opioid epidemic – and these concerns are intensified in the rural areas that I represent. One way to better address these needs is by expanding state support of our local first responders. Emergency Medical Services (EMS), especially volunteer departments, are overworked and underfunded. Adjusting training**

**requirements, increasing funding to develop countywide EMS systems, and defining EMS as an essential service are all strategies that will improve health care statewide.”**

While questioning New York State Department of Health Commissioner Doctor Mary Bassett, Senator Oberacker inquired about budget funding for a county-wide EMS system pilot program. According to the health commissioner, the \$5 million line item would be enough for just ten counties.

**“The state budget proposal totals \$216 billion, certainly we can find a way to prioritize and direct additional funding to improve rural emergency services. I want to see the line item for county-wide EMS systems increased to \$30 million. This state investment would translate to improved health care in underserved areas saving both money and lives,”** said Senator Oberacker.

*The complete exchange between Senator Oberacker and Commissioner Bassett is [available HERE](#).*

**“I appreciate Commissioner Bassett’s response though I was disappointed in her failure to understand the need to recognize EMS as an essential service. As a volunteer first responder myself, I will work to educate her further on just how vital EMS workers are to the state’s health and well-being,”** concluded Senator Oberacker.

Senator Oberacker is a member of the Senate Health Committee and the Joint Senate Task Force on Opioids, Addiction, and Overdose Prevention.