



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

Mayer, Otis Call on Legislature to Deem EMS as Essential and Address Chronic EMT Shortage

SHELLEY B. MAYER March 16, 2022



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(Port Chester, NY) – Standing in front of Port Chester - Rye - Rye Brook EMS, New York State Senator Shelley B. Mayer and Assemblyman Steve Otis today called on state lawmakers to pass their legislation ([S.8432/A.9509](#)) to classify “Emergency Medical Services” as “Essential Services” under the law and to combat the shortage of EMS personnel by ensuring they have access to health and pension benefits.

Senator Mayer said: “For years, our voluntary and other emergency medical service providers have been left to survive without acknowledging that they are truly ‘essential’ to our society. In addition, it is outrageous that our first responders can be denied health benefits when we turn to them to address our own medical emergencies. I am proud to fight to deliver the benefits they deserve and to provide every New Yorker with quality emergency medical care.”

Assemblyman Otis said: “There is a staffing crisis in EMT services around the state. We must give EMT services the tools they need to attract and retain the personnel they require. This legislation will be an important step.”

By establishing EMS as an essential service, municipalities would be required to provide it to their residents in a reliable manner as a matter of NYS policy. It would also create a minimum standard of care through regional and state EMS councils to guarantee all New Yorkers are receiving quality care.

Additionally, this legislation would encourage people to serve as emergency medical personnel by securing access to the New York State Pension System and the State Health Insurance program where possible.

The long-standing, state-wide shortage was brought to the attention of Senator Mayer and Assemblyman Otis by the Westchester County volunteer first responder community.

Westchester County Department of Emergency Services Commissioner Richard G. Wishnie said: “EMS is in crisis throughout the nation, the state, and here in Westchester County. This problem has been brewing for decades and was pushed over the edge by Covid-19. Last year County Executive Latimer requested the county’s EMS Advisory Board to study the issue and make recommendations for improvements. During this process, Senator Mayer met with the EMS Advisory Board on multiple occasions to hear first-hand about the relevant issues. The Senator has now introduced historic and groundbreaking state legislation that when approved will make a huge difference in the lives of people across New York State, as well as here in Westchester County. A key factor and the foundation of the legislation, is recognizing EMS as an ‘essential service’ like Police and Fire services.”

Village of Rye Brook Administrator Chris Bradbury said: “EMS is currently at a crisis point. These dedicated, essential workers have always been there for us and now they need our help. Recruitment and retention efforts have become difficult, as well as the lack of clear and consistent standards among the different agencies. This legislation is a major step to provide the assistance needed for these dedicated EMS workers and agencies across the entire state so that they can continue to provide essential early intervention health care to the residents in our communities.”

Port Chester – Rye – Rye Brook EMS Administrator Kenny Barton said: “The proposed legislation will bring about the most substantive changes to EMS in the state seen in decades. It will greatly benefit the providers of this invaluable and essential service and in turn, the communities they care for.”

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