

# IOWA HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

## BACKGROUND

Rural Iowans are suffering from longer wait times for emergency medical services (EMS). The process that county boards of supervisors must navigate to declare EMS an essential service is inefficient and costly. IHA supports a policy that expands rural access to EMS by allowing local governments to adopt a permanent system to fund EMS in their communities and expand training opportunities for Iowans wanting to become emergency medical technicians (EMTs).

*The Legislature should allow counties to declare EMS an essential service without a special election and end the five-year sunset on such declarations.*

## EMS FAST FACTS

- **Current law is costly and time-consuming.** Although counties can declare EMS an essential service under Iowa code chapter 422D, only three Iowa counties have done so because of the enormous cost and burden of having to hold a special referendum for tax levies.
- **EMS saves lives.** Rural Iowans are suffering from longer wait times for EMS. Recent studies show that longer wait times can result in delayed recovery, permanent injury and death. Fourteen Iowa counties have only one ambulance service in the county borders. One county in Iowa does not have an ambulance service.
- **EMT training should be more accessible and less expensive.** Under current law, only hospitals and community colleges may obtain authorization to start an EMT training program. Expanding the types of entities allowed to start training programs will give Iowans more opportunities to become EMTs.
- **Iowans support EMS access.** In the three counties that have approved tax levies, a high majority in each county voted for the levy. This shows that Iowans support funding rural EMS.

## RECENT POLICY CHANGES

In 2020, the Iowa House of Representatives amended and passed SF 2283, which would have allowed counties to declare EMS an essential service and expanded EMT training opportunities. The bill passed with only one nay vote. The Iowa Senate did not hold a vote on the amended bill.

SF 2283 would have:

- **Created local control** by allowing counties to decide how county funds are used.
- **Ensured transparency** by requiring boards of supervisors to create advisory councils to establish counties' EMS needs, requiring boards of supervisors to ratify declarations during the next general election and allowing citizens of each county to petition for a reverse referendum to eliminate the tax.

## RECENT POLICY CHANGES CONT.

- **Expanded training** opportunities by allowing more types of entities to apply for authorization to open and manage EMT training programs.
- **Reduced government bureaucracy and saved money** by eliminating the requirement that county boards of supervisors spend public money to hold special elections on the tax and eliminating the five-year sunset on the essential services declaration.
- **Saved lives** by allowing counties to more easily raise revenue and expand EMS access in their counties.

*The Iowa General Assembly should allow counties to declare EMS an essential service without a special election and end the five-year sunset on such declarations. This policy gives local governments control over their EMS needs. Instead of creating a one-size-fits-all policy, this policy allows counties to determine their needs and create a sustainable funding mechanism without relying on the general assembly for an appropriation. The policy also would give Iowans more opportunities to become EMTs at a lower cost.*