

1 **2023 NYSAC Fall Seminar**
2 **Standing Committee on Public Safety**
3 **Resolution #1**

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5 **Resolution Supporting and Improving Rural EMS Needs (SIREN) Act**

6 **WHEREAS**, rural fire and emergency medical services (EMS) agencies currently
7 struggle to fund their EMS operations. As a result, many agencies experience difficulties
8 recruiting personnel, providing EMS licensure classes, obtaining sufficient medications
9 and medical supplies; and

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11 **WHEREAS**, fire departments and other EMS agencies play an important role in the
12 provision of healthcare in rural communities. Fire/EMS agencies routinely respond to a
13 wide variety of emergency calls for assistance for critically ill and injured patients. Given
14 the long transport time for patients in rural communities, firefighters and EMS
15 personnel may be the first and only healthcare provider a patient sees in the first hour or
16 two of their medical emergency; and

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18 **WHEREAS**, the costs associated with providing EMS care in a community can be
19 significant. The cost of medical supplies, vehicles, training programs, and personnel
20 recruitment campaigns can be formidable challenges for rural communities; and

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22 **WHEREAS**, the lack of consistent and complete reimbursements from the Centers for
23 Medicare and Medicaid Services further exacerbates the cost of providing EMS care
24 unfairly forcing fire/EMS agencies to absorb a significant share of the costs; and

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26 **WHEREAS**, the price of medications has proven to be one of the fastest-growing costs
27 associated with providing emergency medical care in a community. Many commonly
28 used medications have been, and currently are, in shortage. Naloxone, an opioid
29 overdose reversal drug, is an example of a medication that has experienced a significant
30 increase in cost. Some communities have seen the cost of naloxone increase by more
31 than 700%; and

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33 **WHEREAS**, the COVID-19 pandemic worsened the financial challenges facing rural
34 fire and EMS agencies. Stay-at-home and social distancing orders have forced many
35 agencies to cancel their community-based fundraisers which are typically used to fund
36 their operations. Additionally, decreasing numbers of patients sought transportation to
37 hospitals due to fears of contracting COVID-19. These decreased transportations directly
38 resulted in less reimbursements from Medicare and Medicaid; and

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40 **WHEREAS**, the National Association of Counties has worked closely with several
41 national fire and EMS organizations to create the SIREN grant in 2018. Congress
42 provided \$5 million as an initial appropriation for the grants in FFY 2020, which has
43 steadily increased to \$7.5 million in FY 2022, and \$10.5 million in FFY23. Expanding
44 this appropriation to \$20 million for FY 24 will enable more rural EMS agencies to
45 receive assistance and recover from the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic;
46 and

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WHEREAS, funding the SIREN grants will strengthen rural fire/EMS agencies by expanding the funding available for these agencies. These funds will be essential in supporting, and potentially expanding, the emergency medical services which are available in rural communities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) urges Congress to appropriate \$20 million for the SIREN grant program in FY 2024; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the SIREN grants provide funding for rural fire and EMS agencies to recruit personnel, procure emergency medical supplies, and provide EMS training classes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent to the counties of New York State encouraging member counties to enact similar resolutions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NYSAC shall forward copies of this resolution to Governor Kathy Hochul, the New York Congressional Delegation and all others deemed necessary and proper.