**DRAFT – Task Force letter to Health Committee Members**

My name is <<NAME>>, and I am a <<PROFESSIONAL JOB and ORGANIZATION>>. In 2022, I was appointed to serve on the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) System Sustainability Task Force. Created when Governor Polis signed SB 22-225 (the “Ambulance Service Sustainability and State Licensing” bill) into law, the task force exists to create recommendations on how to preserve, promote, and expand Coloradans’ access to EMS ambulance care.

**I am contacting you today to request that you support HB 24-1218.** This bill, sponsored by Rep. Karen McCormick and Rep. Matt Soper, creates a fair reimbursement structure that protects patients, taxpayers, and Colorado ambulance agencies. In our nearly 18 months of work, my fellow task force members and I identified inadequate reimbursement as one of the key factors threatening equitable access to EMS, positive patient outcomes, and the reliability and sustainability of ambulance service in our state.

HB 24-1218 would require insurance carriers to pay the ambulance rates that cities, counties, and publicly accountable officials set for their communities. This is critical because, as noted in the EMS System Sustainability Task Force Phase I Report that was issued last September, “no payer

reimburses anywhere near the cost-of-service provision, which is why EMS is increasingly transitioning

to a publicly funded model with tax subsidies, including but not limited to local property and sales taxes

to fund and sustain ambulance operations - provided the taxpayers consent to higher taxes.” To say it another way, when insurance carriers fail to pay the rates that cities, counties, and other public officials set for the ambulance agencies operating in their communities, they are making decisions that can directly impact local tax spending and access to high-quality ambulance service. HB 24-1218 protects taxpayers and helps preserve access to EMS.

HB 24-1218 would also help take patients out of the middle of billing disputes between ambulance agencies and insurance providers. The existing balance billing law in Colorado prohibits private ambulance agencies from issuing balance bills for emergency transports. However, only 154 of Colorado’s 205 ambulance agencies (75%) are publicly-funded agencies that can still balance bill patients when insurance carriers fail to pay their locally set rates. No health care provider wants to balance bill patients, ever. HB 24-1218 would enable all ambulance agencies to end the practice of balance billing without increasing taxpayer subsidies.

HB 24-1218 is a strong step forward – but it only one step. When people experiencing a medical emergency call 911, they expect to receive fast, high-quality care. However, EMS is not considered an essential service in our state. Additionally, EMS agencies have evolved to provide new services – such as treating patients in their home environments, thereby preventing transports and expensive hospital-based services – that aren’t reimbursed by public or private payers. Expect to see legislation on these subjects and others in future sessions.

Respectfully, I request that you protect Colorado patients, taxpayers, and ambulance agencies by voting in favor of HB 24-1218.