

Members of Congress of the Health & Human Services Committee,

Thank you for allowing me a few minutes to speak. My name is Adiel Garcia and I am a Division Chief at Johnson County MED-ACT, an EMS Service serving over 600,000 residents. When any of these residents find themselves in a medical crisis or emergency, they dial 911, and last year we responded to over 51,700 calls; however, approximately 32% of those calls were classified as Alpha or Omega calls, which are NOT acute medical emergencies. For example, in 2022 there were 112 patients who have been seen by MED-ACT 10 or more times comprising 1538 calls and one of those patients called MED-ACT 42 times. Many of these patients have significant mental health factors which are issues that are not adequately managed in an emergency room.

Therefore, this year, Johnson County MED-ACT will construct a Community Health Paramedicine Program or CHiPs to begin addressing our patients' needs through alternative solutions. This program is an innovative and value-based approach to healthcare delivery that extends the capabilities of traditional emergency medical services (EMS) to address the broader health needs of our community. CHiPs are highly trained paramedics providing mostly preventive and primary healthcare services outside of the emergency setting. Some of these services will include wellness checks, chronic disease management, medication reconciliation, coordination of care, risk assessments, healthcare system navigation, connection to resources, substance abuse and overdose treatment and education, mental health referrals, and addressing social determinants of health. Some of these patients will be treated at home or transported to alternative facilities where their issues can be managed better than in an emergency room.

Community paramedic programs:

Offer Cost-Efficiency, since their early interventions and preventive care reduces emergency room visits and hospital admissions, leading to cost savings for Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance, and the patient. Also, these programs can prevent the progression of chronic conditions, reducing the long-term financial burden on the healthcare system.

Lead to health Improvement by playing a crucial role in addressing healthcare disparities and improving health outcomes in underserved and rural areas and vulnerable populations. These programs also provide timely and accessible care which contributes to the overall health and well-being of communities, aligning with the goals of healthcare policy.

Offer Patient-Centered Care since their services are tailored to meet the specific needs of individual patients. Reimbursement for Community Paramedic services would ensure their sustainability so that patients receive comprehensive care beyond the traditional emergency response.

Offer healthcare that is integrated into the Healthcare Continuum since Community Paramedics collaborate with primary care providers, hospitals, and community resources to enhance overall healthcare coordination and effectiveness.

The introduction of legislation that recognizes and supports Community Paramedic services through reimbursement and establishing guidelines and standards will lead to positive patient outcomes, improved patient satisfaction, reduced healthcare costs, and enhanced community health; furthermore, it will contribute to a more resilient and effective healthcare system.