



UKIAH VALLEY FIRE AUTHORITY

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To The Honorable Mendocino County Board of Supervisors:

I am writing this letter in support of the funding for Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) as proposed in Agenda Item 5(c) on the 6th of April 2021.

As you should know, EMS is much more than just ambulance transportation. EMS is an entire chain from the 911 center to the hospital. One of the most important links in that chain is the first response component, which in Mendocino County is usually provided by the all or mostly all volunteer fire agencies. These agencies can struggle, and many do, to provide the basic necessities for fire suppression and rescue response, let alone the added cost of medical supplies and training for their dedicated members. While the transport providers charge for their services, the first response fire agencies do not, leaving them to bear the added costs on their own. Funding their needs is a crucial first step in building a better EMS system in Mendocino County.

Challenges exist for the transport agencies as well. While they can, and do, charge for their services, what they charge and what they actually receive is quite different. Often times what reimbursement is received barely covers the costs of providing the services leaving little to put away for future capital expenses which grow more and more expensive each year.

The overall EMS system in Mendocino County is struggling, and has been for some time. There are numerous reasons for this, some already listed above, but help is needed all around. Moving forward with the necessary funding to seed a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) would be an enormous step for this county.

We all realize that this is a onetime source of money, and there are many, many requests. Your Fire and EMS agencies are here every day and every night to protect the citizens and visitors to our county, often for no pay or reward other than the knowledge of a job well done. I ask that you sincerely consider helping those that help others continue to do what they do.

Sincerely,

Doug Hutchison
Fire Chief/EMT-P