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*"IF IT DOESN'T SAY BELL ON THE SIDE,
YOU'VE JUST BEEN TAKEN FOR A RIDE!!!"®*

Rick A. Zehetner
President

James P. Lombardo
Executive Vice President

Wayne A. Jurecki
Vice President, Chief Operating Officer

Keith Rader, M.D.
Medical Director

March 4, 2021

Alderman Marina Dimitrijevic
Chair, Public Safety and Health Committee
City Hall
200 E. Wells Street, Room 205
Milwaukee, WI 53202

RE: City of Milwaukee EMS System

Dear Ald. Dimitrijevic,

We write to you today to say that the City of Milwaukee EMS System in its current form is broke.

While the costs of providing EMS services have significantly increased, the reimbursement for those services from governmental and third-party payors has stayed the same or decreased. For example, during 2019, our cost to provide services for the EMS System was about \$305.00 per response, yet we only collected \$210.00 per response. In 2020, the financial drain got significantly worse due to the increased costs associated with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Bell's size and available resources have allowed us to absorb the losses involved in providing services to the EMS System, but we simply find it untenable to continue to subsidize the EMS System.

During the first two months of 2021, nearly 2,800 patients did not receive an ambulance from the area's assigned private ambulance provider within the contracted response time requirements. Fortunately, Bell's resources allowed us to meet our contractual obligations to respond to calls assigned to us, and we were able to accept many "turnbacks" from the other providers. However, many other "turnback" patients end up being transported by the Milwaukee Fire Department paramedic units, at great cost to the City.

The situation is so bad that last year the EMS System lost one of its four private ambulance providers, who stated that the lack of reimbursement was the main reason for their withdrawal from the EMS System.

To improve the reimbursement issue we have attempted to work with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to increase Medicaid reimbursement for ambulance service. For the first time in two decades, the Department adjusted Medicaid rates, but not nearly enough to make a



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significant impact. Medicaid reimbursement rates remain significantly below the costs of providing EMS services.

To ensure the private ambulance providers have the financial wherewithal to work in the City of Milwaukee EMS system, we request that the City immediately implement a \$125.00 response fee to be paid to the providers for each EMS System response they perform. This response fee would help solidify the providers' ongoing viability and help stabilize the inequitable EMS System.

In addition, in order to reduce losses at no cost to the City, the City must do what is in its statutory power, allow the private providers to use the State of Wisconsin Tax Refund Intercept Program (TRIP). Beginning in 2016, on several occasions the City of Milwaukee decided not to allow the contracted private ambulance providers to utilize this valuable source of reimbursement. We request immediate access to TRIP. This is a quick and simple step to help the private providers collect reimbursement for services provided. The City simply needs to sign a Wisconsin Department of Revenue form to allow the providers access to TRIP. There is no ongoing cost nor program management responsibility to the City.

We ask that you open Council files to address these issues. Without action, we do not know how long we can continue to provide services to the City of Milwaukee EMS System. We look forward to working with you and the Common Council as a whole to implement these two much needed reforms.

Sincerely,

Wayne A Jurecki

cc: Ald. Chantia Lewis, Vice Chair, Public Safety and Health Committee
Ald. Mark Borkowski, Member, Public Safety and Health Committee
Ald. Khalif Rainey, Member, Public Safety and Health Committee
Ald. Scott Spiker, Member, Public Safety and Health Committee
Joshua Parish, Assistant Chief - EMS, Training & Education, Milwaukee Fire Department
Joshua L. Gimbel, Attorney At Law, Gimbel, Reilly, Guerin & Brown LLP