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MMA supports bill to protect EMS payments

By Katie Sagarin

The MMA is supporting a bill that would protect municipalities from incurring excess costs related to emergency medical services.

The bill would prevent insurance companies from directly reimbursing patients for ambulance services, which would leave it to the consumer to turn around and pay the municipality for the EMS expense. This practice is confusing and can force municipalities to track down payments.

The legislation would also allow municipalities to set rates for emergency ambulance services in their communities. Densely populated communities near urban centers have lower ambulance fuel costs than rural communities, where the population is more spread out. Similarly, the mix of insured and uninsured patients differs in urban com-

munities versus affluent suburbs.

The MMA argues that municipalities are in the best position to set fair, reasonable ambulance rates.

"The legislation is necessary in order to keep health insurers from significantly reducing the reimbursement paid to cities and towns for municipal ambulance service, which would shift the cost from users of the service to taxpayers and potentially reduce the level of service that can be provided," said Weston Town Manager Donna VanderClock, whose town is a member of the Central Middlesex Emergency Response Association, a collaborative of eight communities that has a contract for EMS services. "Cities and towns must retain their ability to set fees for ambulance service to cover their costs, based on payer mix and the cost of providing the service." ●