



Comprehensive Alternative Response to Emergencies (CARE) Act

Led in the Senate by: Senator Peter Welch (D-Vt.); Senator Susan Collins (R-Maine)

Background:

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) are on the frontlines of our healthcare system and are frequently the first point of contact for patients in need of care. In rural communities, the demand for EMS services for medical emergencies continues to increase—especially for Medicare beneficiaries, who make up about [40%](#) of patients treated by EMS.

In recent years, around [22%](#) of 911 calls to EMS involved medical conditions that would not require transport to a hospital, including after a fall or for minor medical emergencies. However, Medicare does not currently reimburse EMS for services provided unless the patient is transported to the hospital via ambulance. As a result, EMS providers are obligated to respond and deliver vital services on-scene—without reimbursement—to persons who do not require or who refuse to be transported to a hospital.

Inflationary pressures, coupled with the increasing volume of services that are ineligible for reimbursement, pose a serious threat to EMS, particularly those serving rural and older communities. These challenges have forced EMS providers to curtail service and, in some areas, go as far as [shutting down their services](#) entirely.

Legislation:

The *CARE Act* would amend title XVII of the *Social Security Act* to provide Medicare reimbursement for care provided by EMS when no transportation to the hospital is provided. The bill will benefit Medicare beneficiaries who rely on EMS by aligning the reimbursement model with the services performed. The bill will also provide crucial reimbursement for EMS providers.

Supporting Organizations:

The *CARE Act* is endorsed by the American Ambulance Association; Congressional Fire Service Institute; International Association of Firefighters; International Association of Fire Chiefs; National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT); National Association of Towns and Townships; and the National Rural Health Association.