



Town of West Warwick

Fire Department • 1176 Main Street
West Warwick, RI 02893
Phone: (401) 822-9241
Fax: (401) 822-9244

J. Jeffrey Varone
Fire Chief

Joseph Smeals
EMS Coordinator

Ryan Simko
Community Paramedicine

March 12, 2026

Representative Susan R. Donovan

Chair, Senate Health and Human Services Committee

RE: House Bill 7485

Dear Chairwoman Donovan and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Ryan Simko, and I serve as the Community Paramedicine Coordinator for the West Warwick Fire Department. I am here to express my strong support for House Bill 7485.

Community paramedicine is an innovative and evolving healthcare model that allows paramedics and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) to work in expanded roles supporting public health, primary care, and preventive services for underserved populations within our communities. These programs are designed to improve access to care, support patients in managing chronic conditions, and reduce unnecessary emergency department visits while complementing—not duplicating—existing healthcare services.

In September 2022, the West Warwick Fire Department received a grant from the Rhode Island Department of Health to implement a Community Paramedicine and Mobile Integrated Healthcare program in our community. The purpose of this program is to reduce health disparities and provide proactive care for vulnerable populations. While the program has demonstrated clear benefits for both patients and the healthcare system, there is currently no insurance reimbursement model in the State of Rhode Island for community paramedicine services. Without legislative support to establish a sustainable funding model, programs like ours will continue to face significant barriers to long-term viability.

Our Community Paramedicine program focuses on several key objectives:

1. **Improve Patient Outcomes:** Provide timely care in patients' homes to prevent medical conditions from worsening.
2. **Reduce Hospital Readmissions:** Decrease preventable hospital admissions through proactive follow-up care and monitoring.

3. **Lower Healthcare Costs:** Reduce overall healthcare spending by decreasing unnecessary emergency transport and hospital visits.
4. **Improve Patient Satisfaction:** Deliver personalized, patient-centered care in the comfort of the patient's home.
5. **Enhance the Emergency Response System:** Improve responses to low-acuity 911 calls by ensuring patients receive the right care, at the right time, in the right place.
6. **Strengthen Healthcare Collaboration:** Identify and assist at-risk patients through partnerships with healthcare providers before their conditions escalate to high-risk levels.

The scope of services provided through our program includes chronic disease management for conditions such as congestive heart failure, COPD, diabetes, and hypertension. Community paramedics conduct patient assessments, assist with medication management, and provide education to patients and families to help improve long-term health outcomes.

We also conduct follow-up visits for patients recently discharged from hospitals or skilled nursing facilities to ensure continuity of care and prevent avoidable readmissions. Preventive services are another important component of the program, including chronic disease education, medication compliance support, vaccinations, health screenings, and home safety and fall risk assessments.

Additionally, our team responds to urgent but non-emergency medical complaints where in-home evaluation and telemedicine may be appropriate. In many cases, this allows patients to receive treatment at home and avoid unnecessary emergency department visits.

Since the launch of the West Warwick Fire Department's Community Paramedicine Program, we have seen measurable and meaningful success.

As of **March 1, 2026**, the program has enrolled **217 patients**. Between **July 1, 2023, and March 1, 2026**, our team conducted over **1500 home visits**.

During this time, **150 patients successfully graduated from the program**, meaning they achieved their care goals and were able to manage their health more independently.

According to federal data from the Ground Ambulance Data Collection System, the **average unadjusted cost of a single ambulance transport is \$2,673**, while the **average revenue received per transport is only \$1,147**. In West Warwick our average reimbursement rate is **\$373.17**. This creates a substantial financial gap for EMS agencies, which is even greater for Medicare and Medicaid patients.

Using this data along with internal department data, these 150 graduated patients experienced a **reduction of 326 emergency 911 responses** compared to their usage prior to enrollment in the program. This reduction represents an estimated **cost savings of \$749,744.58 for our agency alone**.

In Rhode Island, the **average cost of an emergency department visit is approximately \$1,750**. Based on the reduced emergency department utilization among these same patients, this represents an additional **estimated savings of approximately \$570,500 for patients and healthcare payers**.

These outcomes demonstrate that community paramedicine programs not only improve patient health and quality of life but also reduce strain on the emergency response system and lower overall healthcare costs.

Investing in community paramedicine will provide significant benefits for Rhode Island residents by improving access to care, supporting patients in managing chronic illness, reducing unnecessary hospital utilization, and strengthening coordination across the healthcare system.

The West Warwick program has already demonstrated the value of this model within our community. With the right legislative support and reimbursement framework, programs like ours can continue to grow and serve more residents across the state.

I respectfully ask for your support of House Bill 7485 so that community paramedicine programs can continue to expand and remain sustainable in Rhode Island. Your leadership will help ensure that residents receive the right care, at the right time, in the right place.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

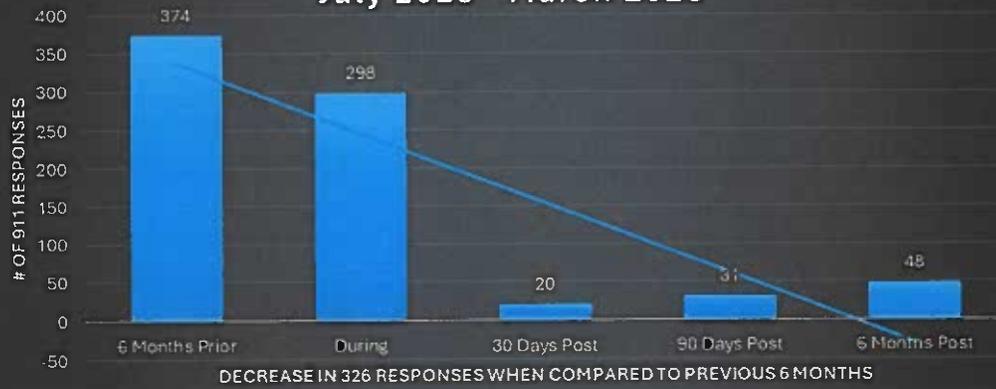
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ryan Simko". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ryan" and the last name "Simko" clearly distinguishable.

Lt. Ryan Simko

Community Paramedicine Coordinator

Data

West Warwick Fire Department Graduated Patients (150) July 2023 - March 2026



Average Reimbursement Rate for West Warwick Fire Department

Activity Posted - All Services- Last 12 Months

	# Runs	Misc. Units	Charges	Payments	Average \$ Per Run
Feb-25	397	2270.5	\$823,427.05	\$113,951.38	
Mar-25	415	2270.2	\$855,753.60	\$149,976.99	
Apr-25	389	1956.3	\$797,145.40	\$127,822.67	
May-25	1	-40	\$301.00	\$92,582.83	
Jun-25	478	2745.7	\$990,810.60	\$55,478.96	
Jul-25	642	3935.7	\$1,361,845.60	\$154,537.94	
Aug-25	528	3424.5	\$1,116,869.00	\$144,873.84	
Sep-25	39	264.4	\$86,877.20	\$142,924.36	
Oct-25	436	2593.1	\$917,562.15	\$118,519.28	
Nov-25	660	4194.8	\$1,394,211.80	\$127,804.56	
Dec-25	436	2607.5	\$913,000.00	\$158,731.07	
Jan-26	0	5	\$212.75	\$125,973.09	
Totals	4421	26227.7	\$9,258,016.15	\$1,513,176.97	
Avg/Month	368	2186	\$771,501.35	\$126,098.08	\$373.16

References

- 1 Medicare Ground Ambulance Data Collection System (GADCS) report. (n.d.-g). <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/medicare-ground-ambulance-data-collection-system-gadcs-report-year-1-and-year-2-cohort-analysis.pdf>
- The most, least expensive states for an ER visit - becker's Hospital Review | Healthcare News & Analysis. (n.d.-i). <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/rankings-and-ratings/the-most-least-expensive-states-for-an-er-visit/>