



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Mark Walczyk

## SENATOR WALCZYK SLAMS REMOVAL OF ESSENTIAL SERVICE DESIGNATION FROM NYS BUDGET

MARK WALCZYK May 13, 2025

Senator Mark Walczyk expressed deep disappointment today over the omission of language designating Emergency Medical Services (EMS) as an essential service from the final New York State budget. This decision, made despite clear bipartisan support, highlights a troubling disregard for the critical role that EMTs play in our communities and jeopardizes the health and safety of New Yorkers.

“It is simply outrageous that we have failed to recognize EMTs as essential service providers,” said Senator Walczyk. “When I inquired about the removal of this vital provision, all I received was blanket statements, accompanied by silence. This is what happens when a handful of lawmakers control the narrative, and it reflects a troubling trend in Albany where the needs of our first responders are sidelined.”

The executive budget initially included provisions to classify EMS as an essential service, along with a proposed \$5.2 million allocation for its implementation. This language was based on Senate Bill S7501, a bipartisan measure co-sponsored by Walczyk that was passed unanimously last year. By omitting this crucial language, the legislature has failed to support our first responders, who are currently facing a significant crisis.

“Counties play an increasingly vital role in providing emergency services across New York State. Their contributions were completely overlooked in this budget, highlighting just how out of touch some lawmakers are with the realities on the ground,” Walczyk emphasized. “Without the

necessary funding and support for EMS, we risk undermining the very foundation of our emergency response systems, which are crucial in times of crisis.”

Recent data reveals the urgency of this situation: 37% of EMS workers plan to leave the field within the next five years, and from 2019 to 2022, New York has experienced a staggering 17.5% decline in certified EMS practitioners—decreasing from 40,046 to just 33,022. This workforce exodus not only threatens the accessibility of emergency care but also places increased stress and burnout on the remaining personnel.

“When people call 911, they expect a quick response,” Walczyk stated. “It’s unacceptable that the language was removed and people will die—and I’m not trying to be hyperbolic, but people will die. Every day, our EMS personnel put on their uniforms to save lives, yet we fail to provide them with the support they deserve. We had a crucial opportunity to elevate EMS to essential service status, which would have empowered municipalities to enhance training, better coordinate services, and direct critical funding toward these vital roles. New York State should have joined the 13 other states that recognize EMS’s importance and provided them with the funding and support necessary to operate effectively.”