



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Peter Oberacker

Senator Oberacker Questions Health Commissioner on Rural EMS Concerns

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ALBANY, 02/08/22 -- State Senator Peter Oberacker (R/C-Schenevus) today questioned New York State Health Commissioner Dr. Mary Bassett during the joint legislative public hearing on the governor's budget proposal.

Senator Peter Oberacker said, **“New York is contending with substantial health concerns – recovering from COVID, increased mental health demands, the ongoing heroin and opioid epidemic – and these concerns are intensified in the rural areas that I represent. One way to better address these needs is by expanding state support of our local first responders. Emergency Medical Services (EMS), especially volunteer departments, are overworked and underfunded. Adjusting training requirements, increasing funding to develop countywide EMS systems, and defining EMS as an essential service are all strategies that will improve health care statewide.”**

While questioning New York State Department of Health Commissioner Doctor Mary Bassett, Senator Oberacker inquired about budget funding for a county-wide EMS system pilot program. According to the health commissioner, the \$5 million line item would be enough for just ten counties.

“The state budget proposal totals \$216 billion, certainly we can find a way to prioritize and direct additional funding to improve rural emergency services. I want to see the line item for county-wide EMS systems increased to \$30 million. This state investment would translate to improved health care in underserved areas saving both money and lives,” said Senator Oberacker.

The complete exchange between Senator Oberacker and Commissioner Bassett is [available HERE](#).

“I appreciate Commissioner Bassett's response though I was disappointed in her failure to understand the need to recognize EMS as an essential service. As a volunteer first responder myself, I will work to educate her further on just how vital EMS workers are to the state's health and well-being,” concluded Senator Oberacker.

Senator Oberacker is a member of the Senate Health Committee and the Joint Senate Task Force on Opioids, Addiction, and Overdose Prevention.