



**Please Support FY25 Funding for SIREN Act Grants
and S. 265/H.R. 4646, the SIREN Reauthorization Act**

Request

The SIREN Act was signed into law on December 20, 2018. This law created a grant program for public and non-profit EMS agencies and fire departments in rural areas to support the recruitment, retention, education, and equipping of EMS personnel. Rural EMS agencies and fire departments often lack the resources to pay for even basic operational needs, and this program is aimed at helping meet some of those needs.

Please include \$32 million in the FY2025 budget for SIREN Act grants to provide much needed resources to already strained EMS agencies working to provide life-saving medical care to the patients in their communities.

This successful program is also due to be reauthorized. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Susan Collins (R-ME) and Representatives David Joyce (R-OH) and Debbie Dingell (D-MI) have introduced the SIREN Reauthorization Act, S. 265 and H.R. 4646, respectively. These bills would reauthorize SIREN Act grants for an additional five years, through 2028.

S. 265 passed the Senate in December 2023. Please support House passage of H.R. 4646, the SIREN Reauthorization Act.

Background

In small towns, farming communities, and frontier areas, rural EMS agencies are a lifeline to the healthcare system for residents, who on average are older, have higher rates of chronic illness, and lower incomes. Rural EMS agencies often are forced to rely on community donations to supplement limited funding from municipal or county governments. While these donations help rural EMS agencies and fire departments maintain their operations, they have not kept pace with the rising costs that these agencies face. In many communities, EMS agencies have been forced to close their doors completely. In the wake of exponential increases in expenses for medical supplies, equipment, fuel, and medications, even the most well-resourced EMS agencies and fire departments across the United States are struggling to stretch their budgets to maintain their operations. Many are also facing crisis-level challenges in recruiting and retaining personnel, fueled in part by low unemployment and an incredibly competitive labor market. Coupled with declines in primary care and hospital service availability, greater distances between healthcare facilities, low reimbursement rates, and the ongoing opioid and fentanyl crisis, these circumstances have created a perfect storm of financial challenges for rural EMS agencies.

The Supporting and Improving Rural EMS Needs (SIREN) Act created a grant program specifically for rural public and non-profit EMS agencies and fire departments to purchase equipment, provide training, and meet other critical needs, called the Rural EMS Training and

Equipment Assistance (REMSTEA) grant program, also known as SIREN Act grants. The REMSTEA/SIREN Act grant program, administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), is a critical lifeline for these budget-challenged rural EMS agencies and fire departments. These grants have provided much-needed funding to assist these agencies in procuring medication and medical supplies, recruiting and retaining personnel, increasing service levels from Basic Life Support to Advanced Life Support, and even replacing older ambulances with newer and safer models.

Since the inception of the program in 2018, more than 100 awards ranging from \$92,000 to \$200,000 have been made to rural communities. The funds have been used to maintain, improve, or expand the level of emergency medical care provided to the residents of those communities – activities that were only possible with the support from the REMSTEA program. While we recognize the difficulty of any funding increase in the current financial environment, please urge Congress to provide \$32 million for SIREN grants in FY2025. This level of funding will allow SAMHSA to better meet the needs of rural communities and fund more of the applications for assistance that it receives through the annual funding announcement for the SIREN grants. This grant program is supported by a multitude of national EMS and Fire organizations.

To learn more about H.R. 4646, the SIREN Reauthorization Act, or to co-sponsor, please contact Ashley Roberts in Representative Joyce's office at Ashley.roberts@mail.house.gov or Meg Makarewicz in Representative Dingell's office at Meg.Makarewicz@mail.house.gov.