**Resolution Supporting SB 658 and HB 639 relating to Coverage for Out-of-network Ground Ambulance Emergency Services**

WHEREAS, public and private Emergency Medical Response service providers are responsible for providing prehospital and/or inter-facility emergency advanced life support or basic life support transportation and care to the patient; and

WHEREAS, the Florida EMS Advisory Council, as outlined in section 401.245, Florida Statutes, is committed to facilitating and promoting the best emergency medical care to the residents and visitors of Florida; and

WHEREAS, public and private ambulance companies provide emergency ground ambulance services as an essential public service to Florida’s communities; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Legislature recognizes that the systematic provision of emergency medical services saves lives and reduces disability associated with emergencies; and

WHEREAS, access to quality emergency care dramatically improves the survival and recovery rate of those who experience sudden illness or injury; and

WHEREAS, ambulance providers deliver lifesaving care to those in need 24 hours a day, seven days a week; and

WHEREAS, studies have found that in Florida, over two-thirds of emergency ambulance rides included an out-of-network charge for ambulance-related services; and [source: Peterson KFF Health Systems Tracker]

WHEREAS, ambulance providers are receiving less than half of the charges by insurers for providing emergency ground ambulance services; and

WHEREAS, the EMS Advisory Council recognizes that without covering the costs of these services, fewer providers will be available, leading to long wait times for essential responses to 911 calls; and

WHEREAS, the practice of balanced billing is currently the only other way to ensure these costs are covered; and

WHEREAS, the EMS Advisory Council recognizes practices of balanced billing places additional burdens on patients who expect these essential public services to be covered by their insurance policy; and

WHEREAS, to ensure fair and accessible emergency ground ambulance services for all citizens, alternative reimbursement rates should be established for the service in the event the service is not covered by an insurance policy.

WHEREAS, several states have already enacted legislation establishing reasonable alternative reimbursement rates, thereby ending the practice of balance billing; and

WHEREAS, federal and other state initiatives continue to be introduced to address insurance coverage for emergency ground ambulance services.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Florida EMS Advisory Council:

1. Supports the legislative intent of SB 658 and HB 639 to ensure fair and appropriate reimbursement by insurers for emergency ground ambulance services.
2. Encourages insurers and ambulance providers to contract with one another while eliminating the practice of balanced billing for emergency ground transports.
3. Advocates for the use of alternative reimbursement rates, rather than a single rate, so that the state will not be interfering with the contractual relationships while at the same time recognizing the costs for such a service vary widely throughout our state.
4. Endorses a hybrid approach to end balanced billing that Provides the minimum allowable reimbursement rates of covered health services provided by out-of-network emergency ground ambulance services; that provides that payment made in compliance with this legislation is payment in full for the covered services provided; and prohibits the billing of additional amounts.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Florida EMS Advisory Council will work with stakeholders to promote this resolution and the passage of these bills. This draft resolution is based on the mission and vision of the Florida EMS Advisory Council, and the legislative intent for the Florida EMS system. It is designed to provide a clear statement of support for SB 658 and HB 639.