



Protecting Air Ambulance Services for Americans Act

Air ambulance services are critical for severely ill or injured patients who need immediate access to emergency health care. Because they can travel faster and cover larger areas than ground ambulances, air ambulances are an essential service to administer lifesaving health care in rural communities in Colorado and across the country. Access to this critical service can mean the difference between life and death– a 2019 [study](#) found injured patients transported by air were less likely to die than those taken by ground.

Medicare beneficiaries [account](#) for nearly 40% of all air medical transports. While operational costs of air ambulance services have increased, Medicare reimbursements have not. A 2017 Government Accountability Office (GAO) [report](#) found that Medicare reimbursement rates for air ambulance services are significantly below the costs of providing care, especially in rural areas.

The Medicare reimbursement rate for emergency air services was last updated in 2002 and has not kept pace with inflation and technology advancements. Since then, over 47 air ambulance [bases have closed](#), and more closures are expected. This would particularly affect rural communities, which already have lower access to health care services.

To ensure people have access to critical, lifesaving air medical services, this would:

- Authorize data collected under the *No Surprises Act* to be used to update Medicare reimbursement rates for air ambulance services;
- Require data collection of operating costs, utilization of services by Medicare beneficiaries, and Medicare revenue received from air providers every three years;
- Require the GAO to conduct a study on the collected data and to provide recommendations to improve the emergency air services fee schedule; and
- Implement a deadline for the Secretary of Health and Human Services to finalize the data collection requirements under the *No Surprises Act*.