



January 28, 2020
Testimony of Lillian Bonsignore, Chief of EMS, FDNY
Oversight: EMS Attrition

Good afternoon Chair Borelli and all of the Council Members present. My name is Lillian Bonsignore and I am Chief of EMS. I'm joined today by Alvin Suriel, Assistant Chief of EMS; Stephen Rush, Deputy Commissioner for Budget and Finance; and Nafeesah Noonan, Assistant Commissioner for Recruitment and Retention.

The Bureau of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is busier than it has ever been. Over the course of this administration, the Department has received over \$60 million dollars in additional funding for EMS and has added nearly 1000 new personnel. In 2019, we responded to more than 1.5 million medical calls. EMS responses fall into one of two broad categories: Segment 1-3 calls, which include life-threatening emergencies such as cardiac arrest, unconscious and choking calls, and Segment 4-8 calls, incidents which are triaged as non-life-threatening incidents. In 2019, FDNY EMS responded to 563,920 life-threatening calls and 967,950 non-life-threatening calls.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on the topic of attrition among members of EMS. As Chief of EMS, I value our workforce, and I know that our members love the job. They work and train hard to become EMTs and Paramedics because they love helping people. Those who

leave EMS don't do so without a good reason. While there are many factors that could lead a member to depart, I'd like to discuss two of the biggest.

One factor that contributes to attrition among our members is the firefighter promotional exam, which enables age-eligible EMS members to take a civil service test and be appointed as firefighters. This exam is uniquely available to EMS members, and the two most recent tests – Exam 2500 and Exam 7501 – resulted in approximately 1400 members of EMS being appointed as firefighters between the beginning of 2013 and the end of 2019. The Department prepares for this by hiring additional personnel ahead of time so that we are over headcount in anticipation of members being appointed as firefighters.

While we don't have specific feedback from every member who resigned, we know that another key factor in members departing is pay. Other reasons include taking other civil service jobs, retirement, childcare challenges, pursuit of less dangerous employment, furthering education, and moving out of New York City and New York State.

EMS members are some of the hardest-working individuals on the planet. Shifts can be long and grueling. Some days, the action is non-stop with call after call and not a lot of time to catch your breath in between. The job involves providing emergency medical care in a wide range of environments, and sometimes that means that our members place themselves in situations that are dangerous or may become dangerous. Most members have dealt with combative

individuals, whether it's a patient, a patient's family member, or an onlooker. Fire Department EMTs and Paramedics operate with the highest level of training for prehospital work, and each year we confront a growing number of calls. 2019 was the busiest year yet for medical calls.

I think that working in EMS is the best job in the world. It has given me an opportunity to save lives every day. What was supposed to be a summer job has stretched into a 29 year career. I've worked my way up through the ranks to become Chief of EMS, and along the way I've gotten to know many of my fellow members. I've reported to them, I've worked alongside them on calls, and in my most recent position as Chief of EMS Training, I've trained a huge portion of our workforce. I know the value that EMS members provide to the city and to the community. I wish that I had the ability to increase salaries, but within the civil service system, that falls under the responsibility of the city's Office of Labor Relations, which negotiates with our unions as well as with unions representing employees in 150 bargaining units across the city.

My team has focused on improving the quality of work life within EMS by addressing aspects that are within my control. We've sought and acted upon feedback from the members; we've strengthened working relationships within our ranks; and we've fostered better communication with both the members in the field and their union leadership. I am proud of the improvements that we have made and we will keep striving to improve life for our members. I am also proud of the support that this administration has provided to EMS, including the 1000 new positions that I referenced earlier in my testimony.

Each of the unions that represent our members will soon be involved in negotiating their next contract. I think that all EMS members should be well-compensated for the important work that they do, and I hope that the parties are successful in reaching agreements at the bargaining table that are satisfactory to all parties.

Introduction 1731

Introduction 1731 would require the Fire Department to make annual reports on personnel resignations. In Section 2, The bill calls for the Department to report on a variety of categories regarding individuals who have departed from EMS, including job title; final salary; length of employment; date of resignation; and, within a year of resignation whether an individual is employed by a city agency, state agency, Nassau county agency, or Suffolk county agency. Of these, the Department has and would be able to report job title, final salary, length of employment, and date of resignation. Some employees who are departing to take a new position immediately volunteer that information as they exit, but it is self-reported and many choose not to. For members who begin new employment at some other point within a year after departing, the Department has no way of knowing if a departed employee has taken a job with state agencies or agencies of counties outside of New York. City agencies other than FDNY may be able to ascertain whether an employee joined another city agency at some point during that time period. The Fire Department does not have that ability.

In Section 4, the bill requires the Department to report the number of EMS employees who have taken a departmental promotional exam during the past two calendar years and if so which exam. This is information that we have and would be able to report. We are happy to further discuss whether modifications to the bill might produce a set of requirements that are feasible for the Department to meet.

I would be happy to take your questions at this time.

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I represent: UNIFORMED E.M.S OFFICERS UNION FDNY

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Name: DREN BAZILAY

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Name: Anthony Almojera
Address: 3305 Ave L APT 3 BKLN NY 11210
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Address: 125 BARCLAY ST NY NY

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Name: Joseph Pataky
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I represent: EMS Superior Officers Association
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Name: Christell Padet

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I represent: Local 2507

Address: 150-39 144th Ave NY

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Name: Dalvanish K. Powell - President

Address: 118-35 Queens Blvd Suetal 21c

I represent: United Protection Officers Association

Address: _____

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Name: KATHLEEN KNUTH

Address: 615 E 14th St #5B NY NY 10009

I represent: FDNY WOMEN'S BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

Address: 615 E 14th St #5B NY NY 10009

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Name: JOSE PROSPER

Address: 275 SPROUT BROOK RD, CORHANT, MARYLAND

I represent: FDNY HISPANIC SOCIETY

Address: PO BOX 219 BRONX NY

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I represent: FDNY EMS

Address: _____

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Name: Stephen Rush

Address: Assistant Commissioner of Budget + Finance

I represent: 9 Metrotech FDNY

Address: C

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Name: Alvin Samuel

Address: Assistant Chief of EMS

I represent: FDNY

Address: 9 Metrotech

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Name: Lillian Bonsignore

Address: Chief of EMS

I represent: FDNY

Address: 9 Metrotech

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Name: Nafeesah Noonan

Address: Assistant Commissioner of Retention & Recruitment

I represent: FDNY

Address: 9 Mott St

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Address: _____

I represent: Vulcan Society FDNY

Address: _____

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Name: Dave Linn

Address: _____

I represent: Phoenix Society

Address: _____

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