



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 251

Resolution calling upon the Mayor and the Fire Department to drop its proposal to eliminate ambulance tours provided by City ambulances, to stop increasing the number of voluntary hospital ambulance tours, and to stop subsidizing voluntary hospitals that participate in the 911 system.

By Council Members Weprin, Monserrate, Nelson, Sanders and Seabrook; also Council Member Clarke

Whereas, In February 2002, Mayor Bloomberg proposed the elimination of 75 New York City Emergency Medical Service ("EMS") ambulance tours, indicating that these tours would be covered by an increase in ambulance tours provided by voluntary hospitals; and

Whereas, For many years the City has supplemented its EMS with ambulance service supplied by voluntary hospitals and this practice continued when EMS merged with the Fire Department ("FDNY") in 1996; and

Whereas, Since the FDNY/EMS merger, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of voluntary hospitals providing 911 ambulance service; and

Whereas, Under the Giuliani Administration, an alarming development arose when several voluntary hospitals were allowed to provide 911 ambulance service even though they had no ambulance service of their own; these voluntary hospitals provide ambulance service through a third party for-profit ambulance company, raising issues concerning FDNY's command and control of the ambulances that operate in the 911 system; and

Whereas, Voluntary hospitals want to provide 911 ambulance service because it is potentially lucrative; the voluntary hospitals pay no fee to enter into the 911 system, however, these hospitals can generate revenue and profits by billing patients for ambulance transports and admitting them into their hospitals; and

Whereas, The FDNY outfits voluntary hospitals that provide 911 ambulance service with thousands of dollars worth of equipment free of charge; and

Whereas, Several times over the past few years voluntary hospital 911 ambulance services have been accused of violating New York State regulations by steering patients in need of immediate assistance to their home base hospitals instead of taking them to the nearest hospital; and

Whereas, Last year, the City Comptroller issued a report confirming the allegations of patient steering against the voluntary hospitals, concluding that voluntary hospital ambulances often pass up closer City hospitals to take patients to their home base of operation, thereby increasing the time it takes for a patient to receive medical care; and

Whereas, Emergency medical technicians ("EMTs") and paramedics who work on voluntary hospital ambulances are not required to complete the same level of extensive training that the City requires of its EMS workers, and many of the voluntary hospital EMTs and paramedics do not have the same level of experience required by the FDNY; and

Whereas, EMTs and paramedics who work for voluntary hospitals do not undergo the same rigorous background check that the City requires; and

Whereas, The City has the responsibility to ensure that its citizens are provided with the best health care possible, including a safe and efficient Emergency Medical Service; now therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the Mayor and the Fire Department to drop its proposal to eliminate ambulance tours provided by City ambulances, to stop increasing the number of voluntary hospital ambulance tours, and to stop subsidizing voluntary hospitals that participate in the 911 system.