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April 29, 2020

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Nadler:

On behalf of the 1.4 million working and retired members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), including 100,000 professionals working in law enforcement, emergency medical services and first response, I'm writing to thank you for your leadership and offer our support for the Public Safety Officer Pandemic Response Act of 2020, H.R. 6509.

We applaud your efforts to make first responders who become disabled or die from COVID-19 eligible for the Public Safety Officer Benefit (PSOB) program. Millions of workers are on the job on the front lines of virus response, putting them in danger each day they go to work helping our country get through this unprecedented crisis. This critical legislation will make sure that if our heroes get sick from this terrible illness it will be presumed to be in the line of duty and their families will not be left out in the cold. We believe, however, that the PSOB program should be made available for all EMS professionals, including those employed by a for-profit rescue squad or ambulance provider.

When individual Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) or Paramedics answer a call, the employer's legal business status is not a factor as to whether they can be disabled or killed in the line of duty. Potential exclusion because of an organization's articles of incorporation run contrary to a program that is established to provide relief to the survivors of fallen first responders, and disability benefits to those catastrophically injured in the line of duty.

We know that as COVID-19 has pushed New York City's FDNY EMS to their limits, the federal government through FEMA utilized its contract with the for-profit provider, American Medical Response (AMR) Inc., to deploy over 750 EMS professionals and 350 ambulances, which included our members from New Hampshire, to assist the beleaguered city. Whether it's hurricanes, wildfires, mass shootings, and now, a global pandemic, federal, state and local governments rely on the professionalism, skill and bravery of the first responder regardless of who signs their paycheck.

We look forward to working with you to make sure all first responders get the protections they deserve as they respond to this nationwide crisis.

Sincerely,

Scott Frey
Director of Federal Government Affairs

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American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO