



## **DUTCHESS COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

September 9, 2025

Dear Senators Schumer and Gillibrand, and Congressmen Ryan and Lawler,

In 1966, the federal government recognized a critical gap in our nation's ability to respond to medical emergencies and took bold action through the National Highway Safety Act. Under the leadership of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and its National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), modern Emergency Medical Services (EMS) were born – with standardized training, regional trauma systems, and federal oversight that transformed emergency care across the country. Federal funding and guidance in those early years made EMS a coordinated, professional service.

Today, however, EMS is at a breaking point. Across the nation – and here in Dutchess County – we face unprecedented recruitment and retention challenges, rising operational costs, aging equipment, and increasing call volumes. In just the first half of 2025, our EMS system responded to 21,505 calls, on pace to meet or exceed last year's total of 41,114 calls. Average Priority 1 response time is just over 8 minutes, with nearly one-third of calls exceeding the 9-minute benchmark, and 8% taking more than 15 minutes. Even with a \$1.47 million County investment in supplemental coverage this year, 9% of calls result in 'inability to respond,' forcing mutual aid and risking delays in critical care.

These pressures are forcing communities to make difficult choices – reducing coverage, relying heavily on mutual aid, or raising local taxes – creating inequities in service where timeliness and quality of care depend far too much on local resources rather than the needs of residents.

I am urging you to champion renewed federal investment in EMS, working with DOT and NHTSA to reestablish a dedicated funding stream for workforce development, training, equipment, and system modernization. Just as the federal government stepped in during the 1960s to build EMS into what it is today, it is time to once again provide the national leadership needed to sustain it.

As County Executive, I have made EMS a top priority – from expanding coverage to investing in recruitment initiatives – but no amount of local action can substitute for a coordinated, nationwide approach. I would welcome the opportunity to brief you and your staff on the challenges and opportunities we face in Dutchess County and to discuss how federal partnerships can help ensure every American has access to timely, high-quality emergency care.

Thank you for your advocacy and for your commitment to public safety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sue Serino". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Susan J. Serino  
County Executive