



Office of the Administrator

Takiyah A. Douse
Interim Administrator

Date: November 20, 2023

To: Mayor Garnett Johnson
Mayor Pro Tem Brandon Garrett
Commissioner Jordan Johnson
Commissioner Stacy Pulliam
Commissioner Catherine Smith McKnight
Commissioner Alvin Mason
Commissioner Bobby Williams
Commissioner Tony Lewis
Commissioner Sean Frantom
Commissioner Francine Scott
Commissioner Wayne Guilfoyle

From: Takiyah A. Douse, Interim Administrator

Subject: FY2024 Proposed State Legislative Priorities

1. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Funding (ACCG Priority)

Background: Augusta currently provides the DPH designated EMS zone provider, Central EMS, an annual subsidy, which includes a 3% escalation. As EMS costs continue to rise across the nation, the burden on local county general fund subsidies does the same. These challenges are compounded by EMS workforce shortages, stagnant Medicaid reimbursement rates and increased inflation. Augusta supports ACCG by encouraging the Governor and General Assembly to adjust the current Medicaid funding mechanism for EMS by 1) allowing the first 10 miles of ambulance transport to be eligible for Medicaid reimbursement and 2) Increasing the EMS Medicaid rate to the rural and urban Medicare rate.

2. Increase 911 Fees

Background: Current 911 emergency fees for wireless, wireline and prepaid services are \$1.50. Today's fees are as a result of a wireless increase in 2010 and a pre-paid increase.

3. Increase Felon Inmate State Per Diem (2023 Priority)

Background: Increase the current \$22 Inmate State Per Diem rate to offset increased operational and medical costs associated with inmate housing. Augusta urges the governor and the Legislature to take full responsibility for state prisoners who are housed in local jails and correctional institutions by increasing the per Diem rate for housing. Augusta's cost to house inmates is \$55.50 per day, with 232 as of today's date.

4. Utilize SPLOST Funding for Maintenance

Background: SPLOST funds are beneficial when constructing new facilities, yet may create a financial hardship when maintenance needs far exceed budgetary limits. Allowable expenses



such as maintenance agreements and equipment warranties would help offset costs incurred with new facilities.

5. Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) and LOST Negotiations (ACCG Priority)

Background: Support ACCG and the current State SDS Study Subcommittee in efforts to reduce conflicts. Counties and cities oftentimes face challenges when negotiating local service delivery strategies and Local Option Sales Tax splits. Amending House Bill 489, known as the Service Delivery Strategy Act, and its implementation in 1999 will improve the resolution process for all stakeholders.

6. Taxpayer Bill of Rights Simplified

Background: Clarification surrounding the notice prescribed by the Taxpayer Bill of Rights to better describe the changes to the digest is suggested. The document is designed to notify the public that the overall digest has increased in value. However, the wording of the notice fails to differentiate the difference between increased millage rates and increased assessed value. Furthermore, it inadequately explains that an overall increase in assessed values.

7. Homeless Eradication and Mental Health Awareness (ACCG Priority)

Background: Augusta's Point in Time Count shows an increase in homelessness. Many experiencing homelessness have high rates of chronic and co-occurring health conditions, mental and substance use disorders. Expanding the availability of Behavioral Health Crisis Centers (BHCC) and Crisis Stabilization Units across the state, among other recommendations, will aid our homeless population of persons struggling with Mental Health issues. Developing adequate support housing for our homeless population, with wrap around support services, will prove beneficial to decreasing and our homelessness issues.