

ORDINANCE

NO. _____

An Ordinance amending Chapter 14 pertaining to Offenses and Miscellaneous Provisions of the Columbus Code to insert a code section 14-24 to provide for fees for lift assistance service calls made by the Columbus Department of Fire and Medical Emergency Services to licensed healthcare and affiliated facilities; to provide penalties for violations thereof; and for other purposes.

SECTION 1.

Chapter 14 of the Columbus Code is hereby amended by inserting a new section 14-24 which was previously reserved to read as follows:

“(a) Purpose and intent.

The Columbus Department of Fire and Medical Emergency Services (“the department”) increasingly burdened by calls from healthcare and affiliated facilities or private transport services requesting assistance to lift individuals from seated or lying positions. These 'lift assists' do not involve medical emergencies or require transport to an emergency department. Despite being non-emergency in nature, they still require Fire EMS personnel, vehicles, and equipment—incurring operational costs, limiting emergency response availability, and increasing the risk of injury to department staff. The purpose of this section is to impose a fee for such lift assistance calls and provide for the enforcement thereof.

(b) Definitions

- (1) *Assisted living facility (ALF)* means any for-profit or non-profit facility which offers residence, services, meals, and skilled care to the elderly, and may include one or more of the following types of services: (1) independent living; (2) assisted living; and (3) skilled nursing care.
 - (2) *Clinic, medical or dental* means a facility for diagnosis, care and treatment of outpatients.
 - (3) *Convalescent or nursing facility* means an establishment providing services to the elderly, illness, or infirm, including lodging, meals and custodial care or nursing care.
 - (4) *Personal care home* means any dwelling, whether operated for profit or not, which undertakes through its ownership or management to provide for or arrange for the provision of housing, food service, and one or more personal care services for two or more adults who are not related to the administrator by blood or marriage, as defined and licensed in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 31-7-12 as such Code Section may from time to time be amended.
 - (5) *Private Ambulance Service* means a licensed for-profit or non-profit EMS provider that
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offers non-emergency medical transportation for patients and facilitates scheduled transport to or from a patient residence, assisted living facility, clinic, personal care home or hospital for non-emergency medical care or return to a patient's place of residence.

(c) Process

- (1) When dispatched, Columbus Fire and EMS crews will respond and assess the situation. If the crew determines there is no injury or acute medical condition —and only a lift assist is required — a fee will be charged to the facility (not the patient) for the service. This applies to assisted living facilities, convalescent homes, clinics, and personal care homes all as defined above.
- (2) If a private ambulance service requests lift assistance from Columbus Fire and EMS for a patient not being transported to a hospital emergency department, the fee will be charged to the ambulance service (not the patient).

(d) Fees

- (1) The fee for lift assistance will be \$350.00 per encounter, provided however, the first call by from a facility where only lift assistance is required will only result in a written warning notice.
- (2) Fees will be assessed to the designated administrator of the defined facility or the entity (as in the case of a private ambulance service).
- (3) All fees must be paid within 30 days of the invoice date. If the responsible party fails to remit payment, the City reserves the right to pursue collection through any lawful means.

(e) Repeated violations

Failure to pay the invoices for three separate invoiced lift assistance calls shall constitute a violation of an ordinance of the consolidated government and shall result in the issuance of a citation of the entity or facility responsible for the invoice (not the patient) to appear in Records Court and be subject to penalties as authorized by Section 1-8 of the Columbus Code.

(f) Confidentiality

To protect patient confidentiality, all personal identifiable information collected through the Fire EMS reporting system will be kept strictly confidential by all City employees and representatives. This information is protected under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and will not be disclosed to the public unless required by law, including but not limited to the Georgia Open Records Act.”

SECTION 2.

All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed.

SECTION 3.

This Ordinance shall become effective August 1, 2025.

Introduced at a regular meeting of the Council of Columbus, Georgia, held on the 8th day of July, 2025; introduced a second time at a regular meeting held on the ____ day of ____, 2025 and adopted at said meeting by the affirmative vote of ____ members of said Council.

Councilor Allen	voting _____
Councilor Anker	voting _____
Councilor Chambers	voting _____
Councilor Cogle	voting _____
Councilor Crabb	voting _____
Councilor Davis	voting _____
Councilor Garrett	voting _____
Councilor Hickey	voting _____
Councilor Huff	voting _____
Councilor Tucker	voting _____

Lindsey G. McLemore, Clerk of Council

B.H. “Skip” Henderson, III, Mayor