

NATIONAL AMBULANCE SERVICE BILL, 2020

MEMORANDUM

The purpose of the Bill is to establish the National Ambulance Service to provide for the effective administration and management of emergency care services.

The National Ambulance Service was established in 2004 by the Ministry of Health as the country's national emergency medical service body. The Service was established as a result of the reviews into patient transport services and medical retrieval services in the country after the Accra sports stadium disaster on 9th May, 2001 where one hundred and twenty-seven sports enthusiasts lost their lives.

The Government of Ghana as a result of this tragedy instituted a five-member Presidential Commission of Enquiry to investigate the causes of the disaster and factors that led to the high number of casualties. The main recommendation of the Commission was for the establishment of a nationwide emergency response system in the form of the National Ambulance Service as the country did not have a national emergency system to respond to emergencies within minutes and provide timely pre-hospital care to save lives of people who would die before reaching hospital.

Though the Service was established in 2001, the formal and structural operations of the Service began in 2004 without any legislative backing. The Bill thus seeks to establish a publicly funded National Ambulance Service to provide a legal framework to specify standards, regulate operations as well as discourage the inappropriate use and operation of ambulances in the country.

The Service will upon its establishment, provide for the effective, co-ordinated and timely delivery of pre-health emergency medical care to the sick and the injured, and the transport of such sick and injured persons to the appropriate health facilities for further treatment. The Service will also be mandated to provide emergency care cover at public gatherings.

Clauses 1 to 4 provide for the establishment of the National Ambulance Service. *Clause 1* establishes the National Ambulance Service as a body corporate with perpetual succession. The Service, in the performance of its functions, may acquire and hold movable and

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immovable property and enter into a contract or any other related transaction. Where there is hindrance to the acquisition of property, the property may be acquired for the Service under the State Lands Act, 1962 (Act 125) and the cost is to be borne by the Service.

The members of the Service as specified in *clause 2* consist of persons in the employment of the Service, public officers seconded to the Service and any other persons employed for the Service.

Clause 3 stipulates the object of the Service which is to ensure the effective administration and management of emergency care services nationwide.

The functions of the Service as stated in *clause 4* include the establishment of a mechanism for the provision of ambulance services in the country, ensuring access to a twenty-four hour ambulance service, ensuring the provision of timely emergency care services for persons involved in accidents, disasters and any other medical emergencies and the establishment of mechanisms for the training of staff and other personnel to enable the staff or personnel obtain the requisite skills and competence for providing emergency care services. Other functions include advising the Minister on matters relevant to the object of the Service and the management of the assets of the Service to ensure the effective use of the assets.

Governance of the Service is dealt with in *clauses 5 to 15*. The governing body of the Service as specified in *clause 5* consists of eleven members who are appointed by the President in accordance with article 70 of the Constitution. The membership comprises of a chairperson who is a person who has experience in management and administration, one representative each from the Ministry responsible for Health, the Ghana National Fire Service, the Ministry responsible for Local Government and Rural Development, the Police Service and the Ghana Armed Forces. The other members of the Board are the Chief Executive Officer of the Service, a representative of the National Disaster Management Organisation, a representative of the Ghana Red Cross Society and two other persons, one of whom is a woman.