

Legislative Update
February 14, 2025
No. 6



On the National Front

The American Osteopathic Association's President Teresa Hubka, DO, has launched a grassroots campaign urging members to take action by emailing their members of Congress to encourage them to support the Medicare Patient Access and Practice Stabilization Act (H.R. 879). Dr. Hubka's campaign highlighted that the rising financial challenges are putting physician practices at risk, and without congressional support, many practices may be forced to scale back services, see fewer patients, or close entirely.

This critical bipartisan bill provides a 6.62% increase to the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) conversion factor from April 1 through December 31, 2025. The AOA has been actively advocating to get this bill introduced to help stabilize physician practices and protect patient care.

If you have not done so already, join hundreds of your peers by using the [AOA Advocacy Action Center](#) to contact your U.S. Representative to urge them to cosponsor H.R. 879 today. Your voice is essential to ensure its passage and safeguard the future of osteopathic medicine.

Our First Call to Action

We have learned that the Senate Committee on Emerging Issues and Professional Registration is set to hear some of the scope of practice bills regarding APRNs on February 25. We need physicians to testify at the committee hearing! I know this is a hassle for you as busy physicians, but if there is any way you can help our lobbyists and be present to testify, it would be much appreciated. Former nurses who went back to school to get trained in medicine, students who are delaying entering the work force until they are thirty so they are well-trained, etc., we can use you all. Please contact lobbyist Rachel Bauer rbauer@msma.org if you can volunteer. She will ensure that you are well-briefed for your testimony and said she'd even help out with finding you a good parking spot!

Healthy Competition

Sunday dished up a devastating Super Bowl loss for our much beloved Kanas City Chiefs. The mood in the Capitol was humdrum over it all week. We think they were really looking forward to a victory parade on Wednesday. There seems to be a little healthy competition going on between the House and Senate as far as which chamber is working the hardest to churn out bills. Since the House had a technical session on Wednesday (originally for the parade) for inclement weather it seemed that the Senate was going to outpace the House this week. Not to be outdone, the House took on floor debate and approval of all eligible bills on their calendar before calling it a week on Thursday. Both chambers are passing bills and sending them across the rotunda to be further vetted at what would be considered lightning speed—especially when compared to sessions of the recent past. A couple of our champions were among legislators to pass bills (not relating to healthcare) this week! None the less, we let them know we are rooting for their success! Congratulations to MSMA member Rep. George Hruza on the passage of his language relating to [capital gains taxes](#) as well as to Rep. Cathy Jo Loy on the passage of [HB 75](#).

Growing the Pie or Making Smaller Slices

This week the House Health and Mental Health Committee had a full slate of work to do. Most notably, they held a hearing on [HB 720](#) which would add a robust list of medical professionals to the list of folks eligible for a loan program from the state. Currently this program is called the “Health Professional Student Loan Repayment Program” and the only medical professionals eligible to participate are physicians and dentists. This bill would seek to change the name to “Missouri State Loan Repayment Program (MOSLRP).” Furthermore, it would expand the list of those eligible to dental hygienists, registered nurses, physician assistants, psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, licensed professional counselors, marital and family therapists, and pharmacists. The Department of Health and Senior Services stated they needed this change in order to draw down more funding for the program. We were there to inform the committee of our interest in making sure participation continues to be allocated to professionals on a needs basis first. We fear that by adding so many other medical professionals to the list of those eligible it could hurt physicians from being able to participate. Many of these newcomers are not experiencing shortages to the extent of physicians. We’re good with getting out a bigger pan for the pie, but we want to ensure our slice is adequate to go around.

Smoke ‘Em if You Got ‘Em

The tobacco industry is at it again with their old bait and switch tactics. This week the House Commerce Committee heard [HB 344](#), nicknamed Tobacco 21. At face value this bill sounds like a good idea because it calls for the age to access tobacco and vape products to be raised to 21 as well as for state regulation. However, this bill is really a wolf in sheep’s clothing. It is actually an effort brought by the tobacco industry as cover to their attempt to deregulate themselves. This bill would allow state law to supersede all local laws and ordinances to regulate tobacco or vape products. This is extremely problematic for many reasons. First, local jurisdictions are the most familiar with the needs of their people. There is no statewide tobacco license. Licensing for these products occurs at the local level. Without local regulation and enforcement there is no enforcement. The state employs six people to police these products. There is no way they can ensure the thousands of locations selling these products are doing so legally. Of course, we opposed this bill in committee. We were surprised by the number of committee members who seemed perfectly fine with deregulating the tobacco industry. There was entirely too much talk about what flavors of vapes are preferred. We have our work cut out on this one. And we aren’t blowing smoke.

Too Close for Comfort

Amid juggling hearings and meetings we have continued negotiating in good faith on the SAFE CARE providers section in [SB 83](#) that we’ve been telling you about. This section of the bill would allow APRNs and PAs performing SAFE CARE exams to do so without being in a collaborating practice agreement with a physician. We have been successful in delaying a committee vote on the bill until our concerns are resolved. However, that effort is becoming more and more difficult. This week alone decisions have gone back and forth too many times to count on the proper way to move forward on this bill. We have presented many alternatives that do not involve throwing collaboration out the window. It is becoming clear that the other side doesn’t want to solve the problem. Instead,

this is their test case to undo collaborative practice agreements. If it is successful for this small group then the rest of them will come at our straw door with a battering ram next session.

Progress

While the Senate Families, Seniors and Health Committee continues to chew on our issues with SB 83, they did advance two bills this week that we are happy to see move forward. On Thursday, the committee voted to pass [SB 45](#) giving patients the freedom to choose where to get their prescriptions filled as well as making all their co-pays count toward their out of pocket costs. The committee also passed [SB 94](#) which would add audio-only technology to the definition of telehealth.

Tort Reform is Back Baby

We told you before session that we believed tort reform measures would be back on the table. This week the Senate debated and passed [SB 47](#) relating to class action litigation with little pushback. This is noteworthy to us as we now see there is a path forward on other tort reform measures important to physicians. As you will remember tort reform has been nearly untouchable in the Senate for years. We are hopeful the roadblocks that existed are now to the wayside.

Physician Advocacy Day – Have you Registered?

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, please register for Missouri Physician Advocacy Day to be held on March 4, 2025. We MUST have a great showing of physicians in order to make a positive impact at the Capitol and show legislators physicians care! I met with residents at Cap Region Medical Center this week, and an example I always give when talking to our youngest members is: Which “demonstration” makes a bigger impact?

THIS?



THIS?



Both have great intentions, but only one has significant impact, and I don't need to tell you which one! Help the profession look like they mean business and [register today!](#)

This year, Jefferson City Medical Group (JCMG) is sponsoring a nice hearty breakfast for the event! Things will be ready to go by 7:30 AM, so plan to arrive early, enjoy breakfast, and conversation with your colleagues before heading to the Capitol!