

# 2021 LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY PRIORITIES



As the statewide professional association for licensed physicians, MedChi is dedicated to our mission to serve as Maryland's foremost advocate and resource for physicians, their patients, and the public health.



**Shannon Pryor, MD**  
*MedChi President*

MedChi is in the trenches every day advocating for the needs of all Maryland physicians, both members and nonmembers, and our patients. In critical times such as these, MedChi has proven to be a strong and effective voice of reason focused on improving physicians' ability to provide the best possible medical care for the patients for whom we care.



**Lorale Ma, MD**  
*MedChi President-Elect*

MedChi's legislative priorities emphasize the protection of physicians and physician practices, so they can best care for their patients.

Protection of Medicaid reimbursement, protection against blanket cuts to Medicare reimbursement, and continued availability for telehealth services for patients protects our ability as physicians to care for all patients.



**Willarda Edwards, MD**  
*AMA Board of Trustees Member & MedChi Past President*

MedChi works every day on behalf of our members, non-members, and patients across Maryland. We work closely with our component medical societies, as well as nationwide organizations like the American Medical Association (AMA), to help our members and all physicians effectively. Legislative advocacy is a large part of this work.



**Michele Manahan, MD**  
*MedChi Immediate Past President*

As we continue to deal with staggering health care challenges, patients need doctors more than ever. In turn, doctors need to be able to practice the art and science of medicine. MedChi preserves those abilities through strong advocacy for patients and physicians in the State of Maryland.

**MedChi**  
*The Maryland State Medical Society*



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## PROTECTING ACCESS TO PHYSICIAN SERVICES AND THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE

- Advocate that the Fiscal Year 2022 Medicaid budget maintain E&M reimbursement rates at current levels and retain the rural Medicaid subsidy. Maintaining funding levels and the rural subsidy is essential to support physician participation in the Medicaid program and ensure that Medicaid patients have adequate access to physician services. In the long-term, MedChi will continue to advocate for a return to 100% of Medicare for E&M reimbursement.
- Oppose policies that would adversely affect patient care by inappropriately expanding the scope of practice of non-physician providers beyond their education and training, including the ability to independently diagnose, treat, and/or manage medical disorders or refer to themselves as physicians.
- Fight initiatives to weaken Maryland's current medical liability environment and jeopardize Maryland's Total Cost of Care Model, including increasing the "cap" on damages in medical malpractice cases or diminishing the immunity protections resulting from a proclaimed catastrophic public health emergency.

## ENSURING TIMELY DELIVERY OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND PAYMENT

- Support initiatives which:
  - Continue the authorization of telephone-only access to medical care when other technologies are not available.
  - Require third-party payors to pay for telemedicine visits equal to in-person visits to enhance access to medical care.
  - Allow hospice patients and patients obtaining written renewals of medical cannabis certifications to continue to be able to obtain written certification through telehealth services.
- Promote greater transparency of utilization management and physician rating system policies used by health insurance carriers and which lessen the administrative burdens placed on physician offices for authorizing services and obtaining payment for services.
- Address administrative challenges faced by physicians in querying, accessing, and submitting data to the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program and ImmuNet.
- Address network adequacy and the further standardization of credentialing requirements.

## PROTECTING THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE

- Monitor the regulatory and disciplinary actions of the Maryland Board of Physicians to ensure the proper treatment of physicians.
- Ensure that actions of the board and its staff during the disciplinary process are transparent and that the laws governing the board provide for accountability.

## ADDRESSING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TREATMENT AND RECOVERY NEEDS

- Advocate for expansion of Maryland's crisis treatment centers throughout Maryland and addressing access to care barriers for behavioral health services.
- Support innovative approaches to addressing the opioid crisis, such as the establishment of a pilot supervised injection facility.
- Advocate for comprehensive behavioral health reform that addresses current system deficiencies and study the feasibility of the creation of additional comprehensive behavioral health facilities in Maryland.

## STRENGTHENING PUBLIC HEALTH INITIATIVES

- Support an expansion of health equity initiatives to:
  - Require hospitals and health systems to develop a comprehensive health equity plan to address health disparities and the social determinants of health.
  - Establish training programs, created in conjunction with community partners, to educate and address problems associated with implicit bias.
  - Advocate that each health system establishes a "Chief Health Equity Officer" and for unaffiliated hospitals to designate an administrator to manage the health system's or hospital's health equity initiatives.
- Support the establishment of partnerships between police departments and mental health professionals to address decriminalization of mental health illness and the establishment of pilot programs in high need areas that dispatch mental health professionals along with law enforcement when 911 calls are characterized as a mental health crisis.
- Advocate for public health and safety initiatives including increasing immunization rates for children; encouraging the creation of enhanced health education programs and curriculum and the development of health workforce mentorship programs; prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products; and advocating for safe working conditions and COVID-19 testing for agricultural and seafood workers consistent with essential workers.