

MEDCHI, THE MARYLAND STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY
HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution 22-20

INTRODUCED BY: Medical Student Section
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of Medicine)

SUBJECT: Expanding Compassionate Exceptions for MCAT Cancellation

1 Whereas, The AAMC has reported that 209,141 students have taken the MCAT, the standardized
2 medical school test for accredited US medical schools, between 2017 and 2019¹. The number of
3 student applicants to medical school, who are or have taken the MCAT, has increased 14% in
4 2020 alone². The AAMC has set cancellation dates surrounding MCAT exams that are
5 unchangeable even in the case of illness or family emergency³; and
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7 Whereas, This has a financial cost for those thousands of applicants, who, in the case of a late
8 cancellation, do not receive any refund and do not have the knowledge that a no-show won't be
9 used against them in their application process³; and
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11 Whereas, before the COVID-19 pandemic, examinees were only refunded about half of their
12 initial registration fee to cancel as early as 29 days prior to their exam⁴. In addition to only
13 receiving a partial refund, there is an additional rescheduling fee⁵. While there is a partial refund
14 for emergencies that happen after the “silver” deadline (15 days prior to the exam), this policy is
15 not applicable for emergencies occurring in the “gold” deadline (29-16 days prior to the exam)⁴;
16 and
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18 Whereas, Inevitably, there are situations in which unforeseen circumstances prevent one from
19 being present for their MCAT examination. Family deaths, sickness and other emergencies can
20 occur 16 or more days prior to the exam; and
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22 Whereas, In addition to partial emergency refunds only being available 15 days prior to an exam,
23 mental health crises (i.e. a major depressive episode, anxiety, panic attack, etc.) are not included
24 in the emergency cancellation policy⁴, despite the AAMC’s supportive stance on physician
25 mental health and well-being⁶; and
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27 Whereas, This has affected many students, including current first-year medical students from
28 several campuses across the U.S., with many recounting how they forced themselves to take their
29 exam while grieving the death of a parent, supporting their families, and paying for newfound
30 funeral and medical expenses; and
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32 Whereas, Other students have troubling stories of suffering from mental health problems after
33 the non-refundable deadlines, only choosing to continue with their test date because of the
34 immense financial burden that accompanies cancellation and rescheduling. Additionally, the loss

35 of one of only seven lifetime chances to take the MCAT was another deterrent amongst students;
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38 Whereas, During the COVID-19 pandemic, the AAMC has allowed full refunds and late
39 cancellations for exams in which the entire \$320 fee is refundable up until 8 days prior to the
40 exam date⁷. However, test takers can report exposure to COVID-19 after this deadline and apply
41 for a complete refund up until the day of the exam⁸; and

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43 Whereas, Thereby, proving that the AAMC has the capacity and capability to provide refunds
44 and compassionate leeway for students in normal, non-pandemic application periods; and

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46 Whereas, Additionally, the AAMC limits the number of times one can take the MCAT in their
47 lifetime to seven attempts, but the current COVID-19 policy includes a provision that cancelling
48 an exam will not contribute to the seven time limit for a test taker⁹; and

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50 Whereas, No aspiring medical student should have to suffer from the emotional, mental, and
51 financial trauma of taking the MCAT when they are experiencing illness, the death of a family
52 member, being involved in a motor vehicle accident, being the victim of an assault, mental health
53 distress or any other debilitating and stressful life event; and

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55 Whereas, Taking the MCAT under these conditions would likely result in a lower exam score.
56 Choosing to miss the exam would result in a loss of \$320 and one of seven lifetime attempts to
57 take the MCAT, if one chose to void the exam.¹⁰; therefore, be it

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59 Resolved, that MedChi encourages the AAMC to further expand the emergency cancellations
60 policy for MCAT cancellations to include mental health crises, including but not limited to
61 depression, anxiety, and severe panic attacks, as legitimate reasons for emergency cancellations
62 that are eligible for full refunds for the exam. MedChi also encourages that the AAMC revise
63 their emergency cancellations policy to cover family emergencies and illness, including but not
64 limited to: the death of a family member or close friend, personal illness or illness of an
65 immediate family member, being involved in a motor vehicle accident or any type of accident
66 significantly impeding on one's physical or mental health, being the victim of sexual or physical
67 assault, or any other stressful life event occurring in the "silver zone" (up to 15 days preceding
68 an exam) that would significantly impede on one's ability to perform on the exam. As the scope
69 of this resolution extends beyond the state of Maryland, MedChi requests that the American
70 Medical Association support this resolution; and be it further

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72 Resolved, that MedChi encourages the AAMC to extend their emergency cancellation policy to
73 include emergencies that happen in the "gold zone" (up to 29 days preceding the exam), and
74 increase the maximum refund that examinees can receive due to cancelling an exam for an
75 unforeseeable circumstance. Ultimately, MedChi advocates for the AAMC to develop a more
76 fair and affordable policy for fielding emergency late cancellations in the hopes of alleviating the
77 financial and mental burden that accompanies personal emergencies.

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80 Fiscal Note: No significant fiscal impact.

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References:

1. [Using MCAT® Data in 2021 Medical Student Selection](#)
2. [Med School Applications Soaring](#)
3. [How to Cancel Your MCAT](#)
4. [The MCAT® Essentials for Testing Year 2019](#)
5. [Figure 1: Registration Zones & Fee Structure](#)
6. [AAMC Endorses Senate Bill Promoting Physician Mental Health and Wellbeing](#)
7. [MCAT Scheduling Fees](#)
8. [Emergency Cancellations After the Bronze Zone Deadline](#)
9. [MCAT FAQs](#)
10. [2018 MCAT Testing Year and Registration Opening](#)