



2012 Legislative and Regulatory Agenda for Maryland Physicians and their Patients

The Mission of MedChi, the Maryland State Medical Society, is to serve as Maryland's foremost advocate and resource for physicians, their patients and the public health. To that end during the 2012 General Assembly Session MedChi shall work on the following objectives:

AS AN ADVOCATE FOR PHYSICIANS:

IMPROVE THE DISCIPLINARY PROCESS OF THE BOARD OF PHYSICIANS: MedChi will work to enhance the legal protection for physicians to ensure that the Board's disciplinary process is fair, transparent, and results in the consistent and efficient resolution of complaints with adequate due process protections.

ENHANCE PHYSICIAN PAYMENT AND INSURANCE REFORM: MedChi will continue its efforts to improve Maryland's reimbursement climate with these initiatives:

- Require insurers to provide prior authorization for a procedure or a prescription within 1 hour of request and to prohibit the insurer from denying a claim if a prior authorization determination is not made in that timeframe;
- Work to assure that Maryland physicians have significant input into the design of bundled or packaged payment systems for hospital services that include physician services to assure any proposed system has a positive impact on physicians;
- Monitor compliance with the Assignment of Benefits (AOB) law and work with the Maryland Insurance Administration to ensure strict enforcement of its provisions;
- Persuade federal officials to approve a .1% assessment on hospital rates to support a State Loan Assistance Repayment Program for graduating medical students;
- Support legislation to mandate all payors pay physicians for services rendered whether performed remotely or face to face;
- Amend Maryland's Electronic Health Records (EHR) law to require that insurers' monetary incentives apply to all physicians, not just primary care physicians;
- Seek a General Assembly initiative asking Congress to enact legislation to allow collective bargaining for physicians.

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STRENGTHEN MEDICAL LIABILITY REFORM: MedChi will continue to strongly oppose trial lawyer attempts to increase the “cap” on damages in medical malpractice cases; support efforts to establish a pilot project for specialized health courts and to limit repeated continuances in medical malpractice cases; and otherwise work to protect and strengthen the legal liability environment for physicians in Maryland.

AS AN ADVOCATE FOR PATIENTS:

REQUIRE TRUTH IN ADVERTISING: MedChi will work to enact AMA model legislation that requires physicians and non-physicians to clearly identify their credentials thereby ensuring that the consumer or patient is aware of the distinctions in education, training and qualifications between physicians and non-physicians;

PROTECT MEDICAID AND THE UNINSURED: MedChi will continue to work to protect the integrity of the Medicaid program with respect to eligibility, benefits and physician reimbursement. MedChi will also work to ensure that the Medicaid program can accommodate the thousands of new patients who will be enrolled with the implementation of federal health reform and that an adequate safety net remains for those individuals who remain uninsured;

DEFEND THE SCOPE OF MEDICAL PRACTICE SO PATIENTS ARE SEEN BY A PHYSICIAN: MedChi will fight to assure that all patients have access to physicians and that physician extenders have appropriate training and physician oversight. The new federal health reform law will place unprecedented demands on the health care system as thousands of newly insured individuals seek physicians. It is important that these new patients find physicians and that non-physicians do not use this as an opportunity to increase scope of practice without adequate education and training.

AS AN ADVOCATE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH:

ENHANCE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF MARYLAND RESIDENTS: MedChi will advocate for continued improvements to the public health and safety of Maryland residents by the following:

- Supporting legislation to protect children from the dangers of tanning beds;
- Supporting an increase in the tobacco tax to pay for public health programs;
- Strengthening Maryland’s child safety seat and seat belt requirements to comply with new federal recommendations;
- Working to ensure that revenues from the recent increase in the alcohol tax are dedicated to health care and public health programs.