

2021 Legislative Summary

The 2021 legislative session was a busy session for healthcare, and the Mississippi AAP continues to be a strong voice for pediatricians and patients. The MSAAP Governmental Affairs Committee reviewed hundreds of bills and tracked numerous pieces of legislation throughout the course of the nearly 90-day session. Here are some highlights:

Each year, our chapter follows numerous scopes of practice bills that would allow for the expansion of scope within various healthcare professions. Usually there are anywhere between 5-10 bills each session; this session a bill that would allow for independent practice of nurse practitioners after 3,600 collaborative hours. This bill did pass the Mississippi House of Representatives but died in the Senate Public Health Committee where it was not brought up for discussion. The Chairman of Senate Public Health indicated there would be hearings during the summer on this issue, and MSAAP looks forward to being part of those hearings and presenting testimony for the committee to consider. We worked alongside other specialty societies to advocate against this piece of legislation and will continue to work with other groups as this topic continues to be at the forefront of legislative debate. We would ask each member to reach out to their respective Senators and Representatives and offer to be a source of information on this topic moving forward.

While physicians and patients have spent a year adapting to changes in healthcare as a result of COVID-19, MSAAP is committed to advocating for reimbursement parity for telemedicine while also advocating for patient safety within the telemedicine arena. This once in a generation pandemic has broken down barriers and encouraged expansion of telemedicine by necessity, and it also has created a delivery model that expressly encourages patients to stay out of the doctor's office. We look forward to working with all stakeholders moving forward to ensure payment parity for physicians while providing a safe healthcare delivery model for patients. The MSAAP was successful in advocating for the passage of legislation that removed two or more hospitalizations within the last year for remote patient monitoring to be covered by insurance. This bill was signed by the Governor in March and goes into effect on July 1.

Much of the session was spent working on the Medicaid Technical Amendments Bill that was before the legislature for reauthorization of the Division and how it operates. The MSAAP has been working with numerous Medicaid providers since last summer to help address issues that impact practices across the state. We participated in hearings held by the House and Senate Medicaid Committees, and the final version of the bill was a success for Medicaid providers and beneficiaries in Mississippi. A few points of the bill include setting physician reimbursement at 90% of Medicare, allows for FQHCs, RHCs, and CMHCs to be recognized as both originating and distant site providers for telehealth reimbursement, deletes the 5% rate reduction for certain services,

extends options available to the Director should Medicaid operate under a deficit, removes the specific percentage limitation on managed care enrollment, requires a standardized credentialing process, and authorizes the Division to extend current contracts for one year with the full requirements of the technical bill in place. One disappointment was the bill not including an extension of coverage for postpartum care. While this was in the Senate's position of the Medicaid Technical Amendments Bill, it did not make it into the House's position nor the final bill. We will continue to advocate for this extension of postpartum coverage for the health of women and children across Mississippi.

The MSAAP has long advocated for early learning collaboratives. We are proud that the state of Mississippi has again been recognized as one of only six states whose state-funded pre-K program meets all 10 quality standards for early childhood education according to the National Institute for Early Education Research. The MSAAP was successful in advocating for an increase of funding for Early Learning Collaboratives to \$16 million. This should result in the state of Mississippi being able to double the children being served.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Legislative Consultant this year. Do not hesitate to reach out to me for questions.

Ashley Thompson
ashleybthompson@hotmail.com
601-503-5195