



MISSISSIPPI ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

2021 Legislative Summary

The 2021 legislative session ended was a busy session for healthcare, and the Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians continues to be a strong voice for family medicine physicians and patients. The legislative 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, the Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians 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, the MAFP looks forward to being part of those hearings and presenting testimony for the committee to consider. The MAFP 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 MAFP 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, the MAFP 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, it also has created a delivery model that expressly encourages patients to stay out of the doctor's office. The MAFP looks forward to working with all stakeholders moving forward to ensure payment parity for physicians while providing a safe healthcare delivery model for patients. The MAFP was successful in advocating for the passage of legislation that removed a 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 MAFP has been working with numerous Medicaid providers since last summer to help address issues that impact practices across the state. MAFP participated in hearings held by the House and Senate Medicaid Committees, and the final version of the bill is 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.