



## ALABAMA ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

### **Advancing Healthcare: Triumphs and the Path Forward from Alabama's 2024 Legislative Session**

As the curtains close on another productive legislative session in Alabama, we have witnessed the power of democratic processes in shaping a promising future in healthcare for our beloved state. The collaborative efforts across the aisles have delivered some successes beneficial to the needs of our members, but not all hard-fought battles were won. As we reflect on the session's milestones, it is with a sense of pride and optimism that we look forward to the tangible benefits these legislative achievements will bring to our members, as well as a fire to continue the fight for those yet obtained. Here are some of the results of the 2024 session.

#### **HB 291 – Rural Physician Tax Credit**

**What's in the Bill:** Sponsored by Rep. Ed Oliver, [HB 291](#) would update a rural physician tax credit aimed at attracting more doctors to practice in rural areas. The existing tax credit, established in 1993, is set to be enhanced to \$10,000, doubling its previous amount. This expansion will extend eligibility to physicians residing in counties with populations of 50,000 or fewer, as well as municipalities with populations of 20,000 or less – in a county with 50,000 or less. The updated tax credit seeks to incentivize physicians to serve in underserved rural communities, addressing long-standing healthcare disparities and bolstering access to medical care for Alabama's rural residents. *Indefinitely postponed.*

**What Happened:** The AAFP advocated for this legislation but unfortunately it stalled in the House Ways and Means Education Trust Fund Committee. The Academy has begun discussion with the Rural Caucus of the House of Representatives as well as leaders of both chambers and this legislation will continue to be a priority as we look toward the 2025 Legislative Session.

#### **HB 232 – Negotiated PT Bill**

**What's in the Bill:** The revised [HB 232](#) allows physical therapists with advanced qualifications to treat patients without a referral for up to 11 visits or 30 days. However, strict safeguards are in place, including mandatory referrals for certain conditions or lack of improvement. The bill prohibits PTs from practicing medicine and ordering or interpreting any medical imaging, diagnostic tests, clinical labs, medical procedures, admitting or discharging patients, or prescribing any medication or drugs. The bill also has a "truth in advertising" component for PTs holding doctoral degrees.

**What's Next:** The bill passed out of both chambers and now heads to the Governor.

#### **SB 128 – State Health Officer Bill**

**What's in the Bill:** Sponsored by Sen. Tim Melson, [SB 128](#) aims to abolish the State Board of Health. It proposes a new committee structure, including physician members appointed by the Medical Association, specialty organizations, and governmental representatives.

**What Happened:** Bill signed by the Governor

#### **SB 100 – BMSA scholarships**

**What's in the Bill:** Sponsored by Sen. Donnie Chesteen, [SB 100](#) proposes the establishment of the Board of Medical Scholarship Awards Fund within the State Treasury. It mandates that funds received by the board from loan repayments, fees, donations, grants, and bequests would be deposited into this fund. Furthermore, the bill ensures continuous appropriation of the fund for granting scholarships and providing loans to medical students.

**What Happened:** The amended bill passed and will become effective on October 1, 2024.

#### **HB 165 – Vaccine Consent**

**What's in the Bill:** Sponsored by Rep. Chip Brown, [HB 165](#) proposes a change to existing law regarding the consent process for medical procedures involving minors. Under current law, minors aged 14 or older are permitted to consent to medical, dental, and mental health services for themselves without parental consent. However, the bill would mandate written consent from a parent or legal guardian for any minor to receive a vaccination. This change would add an additional requirement for parental or guardian involvement specifically for vaccinations, even for minors who are otherwise authorized to consent to medical treatment under existing law. ***Indefinitely postponed.***