



On May 12, 2021, the American Podiatric Medical Association hosted a Virtual Legislative Conference providing attendees (members of Florida Podiatric Medical Association’s Governmental & Legislative Committee and PAC Committee) an opportunity to interface directly with members and staff of the U.S. Congress via Zoom.

Participants who signed up had their Hill meetings scheduled for them and were provided with meeting materials and grassroots advocacy training to ensure everyone was prepared to lobby their members of Congress on issues important to the profession, including:

1. Helping Ensure Life- and Limb-Saving Access to Podiatric Physicians (HELLPP) Act

The federal Medicare definition of physician has included podiatrists for more than 50 years. However, the federal Medicaid definition of physicians only ensures coverage of necessary foot and ankle care if provided by a medical doctor (MD) or a doctor of osteopathy (DO).

Because the Medicaid definition for physicians differs from Medicare and does not include DPMs, coverage for care provided by podiatrists is optional in Medicaid.

The HELLPP Act would enhance patient access to DPMs and improve health quality, while reducing health costs and the federal deficit by:

- a. Recognizing DPMs as physicians under Medicaid;
- b. Clarifying and strengthening coordination of care among providers under Medicare’s current Therapeutic Shoe Program for patients with diabetes; and
- c. Providing a pay-for mechanism, which would strengthen Medicaid program integrity.

2. Amputation Reduction & Compassion Act (HR2631)

The American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) requested members of Congress cosponsor and support legislation to require public and private health plans to cover screenings for beneficiaries who are at-risk of Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD), introduced by Rep. Donald Payne (D-NJ) and a host of bipartisan cosponsors on April 16, 2021 in the U.S. House.

The ARC Act would reduce the incidents of lower limb amputation by requiring previous arterial testing before amputation could even be considered as a course of treatment in the hopes that alternative treatments could be applied. Undergoing regular screenings could improve patient outcomes and reduce costs to the healthcare system.

3. Technical Correction to VA MISSION Act (HR2545)

The American Podiatric Medical Association requested members of Congress support legislation to correct a technical error created by the MISSION Act, introduced by Rep. Frank Mrvan (D-IN) and Rep. Brad Wenstrup (R-OH) on April 13, 2021 in the U.S. House, soon to be introduced in the U.S. Senate.

This legislation makes changes to the Office of the Under Secretary for Health within the Veterans Health Administration to create a new Podiatric Medical Director position, while eliminating the previous title of Director of Podiatric Services. This new position would still be responsible for the operation of the podiatric service. This legislation is consistent with the intent of Congress in providing equity for podiatrists, correcting a technical error, and placing the Podiatric Medical Director on equal footing to their physician and dentist peers.

4. Student Loan Reform (HR 1918 & HR 2163)

HR 1918 Request

The American Podiatric Medical Association requested members of Congress cosponsor and support legislation to modify the requirements for lending institutions and provides flexibility for borrowers, introduced by Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA) and a host of bipartisan cosponsors on April 16, 2021 in the U.S. House.

Graduate student debt has been on the rise since lending began, even after adjusting for inflation. Today's podiatric physicians are entering the workforce, at the very beginning of their careers, with nearly a quarter of a million dollars in debt.

HR 1918 provides economic relief in a fair and responsible way for the next generation of health care providers by:

- Allowing borrowers the opportunity to refinance their federal student loans whenever the interest rate on the 10-year Treasury Note is lower.
- Eliminates origination fees and sets future student loan interest rates at the 10-year Treasury Note rate, plus one percent (1%).
- Delays student loan interest accrual for many low- and middle-income borrowers while they are still in school.
- Allows medical and dental residents to defer payments until after they have completed residency training.

HR 2163 Request

The American Podiatric Medical Association requested members of Congress cosponsor and support legislation to modify the Ford Federal Student Loan Program, introduced by Rep. Mark Pocan (D-WI) and a host of bipartisan cosponsors on April 9, 2021 in the U.S. House.

HR2163 provides flexibility for borrowers to modify the interest rate of their loan whenever interest rates are reduced. Current policy only allows borrowers to refinance once during the lifetime of the loan.

Finally, participating FPMA members additionally asked Congress to end sequestration, essentially repealing the automatic reduction to Medicare reimbursements.

The following FPMA members should be recognized for their efforts on May 12, 2021 for taking time from their practices to interact with members and staff of the U.S. Congress on behalf of the podiatric profession:

Dr. Edward Fazekas
Dr. Barney Greenberg
Dr. David Schweibish
Dr. Andre Williams
Dr. Alissa Zdancewicz

Although the 2021 Hill visits were vastly different than being there to advocate in person, they were nonetheless effective. Sincerest thanks to APMA and our dedicated volunteers.