Aug. 19, 2022: State Advocacy Update

New Delaware law supports physicians who seek care for wellness, burnout

A new Delaware law makes clear that “a mental or physical disability or serious health condition does not prevent a physician’s ability to practice medicine with reasonable skill and safety when the condition is reduced or ameliorated because of ongoing treatment.”

The law also supports physicians who may require medication as part of their treatment or who participate in a physician health program. Governor Jon Carney signed Senate Bill 300 into law July 29. The AMA and the Medical Society of Delaware strongly supported (PDF) passage of SB 300.

According to Medical Society of Delaware President Matthew J. Burday, DO, “The passage of SB 300 marks a major milestone for physicians and their mental health in the State of Delaware. No longer must physicians with mental health difficulties struggle and suffer. The consequences of lack of treatment can be devastating, with suicide being the end result for some. This law also is an example of how physicians, hospital systems, medical societies, legislators, and legal teams can work together successfully for a common goal. Perhaps this bill can serve as a model for other states.”

"We've worried for so long about our ability to get our physicians in the state the help that they need," Heather Farley, MD, chief wellness officer at ChristianaCare, told a local reporter. “Our physicians are humans as well, and they have all of the same struggles that anyone, as a human being, has. Now, they know that it's okay to reach out for that help that they need. So this is a really meaningful moment for us."

Read more about AMA advocacy in support of physician wellness and other efforts to reduce physician burnout.

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