

Compiled Toolkit

Dear colleague:

National Medical Student Advocacy Week, scheduled for Oct. 10-14, 2022, is right around the corner! This national grassroots effort was created by the AMA to get students involved with advocacy at the local level. The purpose of this week is to equip medical students nationwide with the tools to effectively advocate locally for their needs and those of their patients.

During the week, you will be provided with the tools to help your local student section members:

- 1) Communicate key issues effectively and
- 2) Set up meetings with their local congressional leaders.

The advocacy topics that we will focus on this year for National Advocacy Week are 1) <u>Telehealth</u>, 2) <u>Prior Authorization</u> and 3) <u>student loan repayment</u> count towards employee 401k contributions. More information and issue briefs on these topics will be provided soon.

You are an integral part of this event, and I am excited to partner with and help prepare you for National Advocacy Week on your campus. If you have any questions or want to discuss programming ideas, please do not hesitate to contact me directly – Kylee Borger – your Government Relations Advocacy Fellow (kylee.borger@ama-assn.org).

Please review the event planning brief attached. Stay tuned, more resources coming soon. I look forward to seeing what you all produce this year!

Sincerely, Kylee Borger AMA Government Relations Advocacy Fellow

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How to prepare for National Advocacy Week (Oct. 10-14, 2022)

~One Month before

- **Invite your Congressional representative** or someone from their office to speak at your school, either in-person or virtually. Or, request a meeting with them in their district office. You can search for your congressional representative here.
 - Sometimes your Congressional representative cannot attend the meeting and will send a staff member instead. These meetings are also important since staff members advise the Representative on how they should vote.
- **Plan your events** make sure space is available and times/dates do not conflict with other campus events
 - o Consider inviting a physician expert, patient to talk about their experiences with telehealth or prior authorization or plan a financial literacy event to discuss the 401k topic

Two Weeks before

Start marketing – tell your friends, classmates, post on social media, hang up flyers, etc. Make sure people know about your awesome event!

One Week before

- Confirm the agenda and speakers for your events
- Continue to promote through your communication channels

On the day of your events

- Send a reminder message to help increase attendance make sure your friends and classmates attend!
- Engage respectfully with your speaker by thanking them before and after the event. For example, ensure your speaker has any relevant information and updates prior to the program starting and make sure to have 2 to 3 questions ready to kick-off a Q&A.
- Take photos of your event!
- Post your event photos on social media and tag the AMA using #MSSAdvocacyWeek!
- Share your photos with me (Kylee <u>kylee.borger@ama-assn.org</u>) for the opportunity to win an award.
- Don't forget to thank your speakers.

Schedule of events

National Advocacy Week, October 10-14th

During National Advocacy Week, you will be hosting programs for your school and community - whether that be hearing from physician or community leaders on prior authorization, telehealth, or student loan repayment or speaking with your Congressional representative. The below schedule are national and regional level events to supplement your programming. Don't forget to let us know what is happening at your school this week to be eligible for an award!

Updated information will be posted when available – please keep checking the web page for up-to-date information.

Date, Time and Link	Topic and Speakers
Monday, October 10 th	How to Communicate Effectively with Congress
@ 6 pm eastern	David Lusk, founder of Key Advocacy
Register <u>here</u>	Overview of National Advocacy Week topics
	Bryan Hull, JD, MPH, Division of Legislative Counsel, AMA
Tuesday, October 11 th	Region 1 program on Advocating for Reproductive Justice and Improving Access to
@ 6 pm pacific	Care through Telehealth
Link – <u>here</u>	 Jeremy Fish, MD, Program Director at John Muir Health FM Residency; Rachel Oliver, MD, Faculty & Former Chief Resident at John Muir Health FM Residency; and Serena Liu, MD, Former Chief Resident at John Muir Health FM Residency
Wednesday, October 12th @	Region 3 program on Medical ASL Interpretation in the Time of Telehealth
12pm central	Sandie Busby, Assistant Professor of Language at Oklahoma State
	University and a licensed medical ASL interpreter
Link – <u>here</u>	
Wednesday, October 12th @	Region 1 program on Loan Repayment and Personal Finance
5pm pacific	 Yma-Richel Nabong, Ed.D, MBA, Director of Financial Aid Services &
	Sharlene Tullao from S.M.A.R.T Dr., UC Irvine Financial Aid Department
Link- <u>here</u>	
Thursday, October 13 th	Region 7 program on Telehealth During COVID and Beyond: Recent Evidence,
@ 6pm eastern	Policy Challenges and Future Directions
r · 1 1	• Jonathan P. Weiner, Dr.P.H., Professor of Health Policy & Management
Link – <u>here</u>	and of Health Informatics; Co-Director, Center for Population Health
	Information Technology (CPHIT); Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public
Thursday, Oatabar 12th	Health Design 5 program on Telebrotth
Thursday, October 13 th @ 7pm eastern	Region 5 program on Telehealth
w /pin eastern	 Dr. Steven Stack, MD, former AMA president and current Kentucky Commissioner of Public Health
Link – <u>here</u>	Commissioner of Fuotic freatur
Thursday, October 13 th	Region 2 program on Telemedicine – Bridging the health gap
@ 6:30 pm central	Jeydith Gutierrez, MD, Clinical Associate Professor of Internal Medicine
Control Processing	at University of Iowa and Director of the Telehospitalist Service at Iowa City VA
Link – <u>here</u>	Medical Center
Thursday, October 13 th	Region 6 program on How to Make Your Voice Heard in the Halls of Congress:
@ 7pm eastern	Pearls and Pitfalls
	Dr. Marilyn Heine, AMA Board of Trustees Member
Link – <u>here</u>	
Friday, October 14 th	Region 4 program on Why Telemedicine Can Be the Magical Key
@ 10am eastern	Sandra Scott, Georgia State Representative
-	
Link – <u>here</u>	

Talk to Your Representative

Your local, state, and federal representatives represent you and want to hear from you. <u>Find your representative</u> and connect with them – make a phone call, write a letter, or talk to them inperson. You can also invite them to speak at your medical school.

The <u>AMA's Guide to Physician Advocacy</u> uncovers the ins and outs of communication with Congress and provides tips on how you can make your voice heard through social media, letters, emails and phone calls to Congress. Excerpts have been provided below for your convenience.

In-person:

1) Set up a meeting

Phone call script

Placing calls to congressional district offices can be intimidating, especially if you've never done it before. You don't need to read the following word-for-word when you call, rather it's meant to serve as a basic outline of what you ought to say. Reach out to Kylee Borger at 202-789-7424 (office phone), 714-944-0481 (cell) or kylee.borger@ama-assn.org if there are any questions or concerns.

- Could you please direct me to the member of your staff who handles scheduling for your district office? (*Wait for those directions, to be transferred, etc.*)
- (*If speaking to a new person*) Hello, my name is [NAME] and I am calling on behalf of the medical students at [Medical School].
- We would like the opportunity to schedule a virtual or in-person meeting in the district with [REP./SEN. NAME] during the week of October 10-14 as a part of our Medical Student National Advocacy Week to discuss the following [choose one, two, or all three topics to discuss]
 - Telehealth Coverage
 - Prior Authorization
 - Student Loans repayment counting towards retirement account contribution
- I am available to provide additional information that you may require, and we are happy to accommodate [REP./SEN. NAME]'s schedule, if that week does not work well.
- (*If the Rep./Sen. is unavailable*) Would it be possible for us to meet with the staff member who handles topics related to health care?
- (When you get a meeting date) I appreciate your assistance in arranging this meeting. Is there an email address or phone number where I can contact you to confirm the meeting as the date approaches? Thank you very much, have a great day!

2) Prepare for your meeting:

Meeting with a member of Congress or their congressional staff is an effective way to discuss issues and legislative priorities. Meeting with a member's staff, such as the health legislative assistant, can be just as productive as meeting with the member. Careful planning and having clear goals for the meeting are key to conducting a successful in-person visit.

- Review the issues (check out the "Educate yourself on the Issues" section below or on the web page) and research the position of your member of Congress. If they already support one of the bills, thank them during your visit.
- Be specific directly ask your member of Congress or their congressional staff to support the specific bills/positions in the issue briefs; Or, if they already have supported the bills/positions we are advocating for, thank them.

3) After the visit:

- Ask the representative or staffer if you can take photos and tag them on social media
- Follow up after the meeting by writing an email or letter that thanks the member and/or staff for their time, includes any photos taken, and recaps agenda items and reiterates any requests
- Update us (email me Kylee at kylee.borger@ama-assn.org) about how the meeting went and if the representative had any questions that AMA staff can help follow-up with

Send Emails and Letters

Reading feedback from constituents is something many members of Congress prioritize, and most offices keep tally of feedback they receive on particular issues. Written correspondence is most impactful if it includes personal stories and original thoughts. Use the Physician's Grassroots Network tool to generate an email to all of your state and federal representatives – you can use this tool to compose an email without searching for individual office email addresses.

Make Phone Calls

Phone calls to your members' district or Capitol Hill office are a great way to voice your concerns and ask questions about legislative issues. Although you will rarely speak directly to the member, congressional staffers should know the member's position on particular issues and will relay your concerns to the member.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE

Oftentimes, our ability to advocate hinges on our ability to amplify a message. This packet is filled with ideas, but your work will determine what change happens in the real world. You've lived a life full of passion; you've met patients who share deep stories and count on physicians to care for them. Social media is an invaluable tool in our campaign to advocate policies that serve these patients. Spreading awareness is one of our most important tools to drive solutions, as are organization and relationships with policymakers--these AMA's strengths, as your powerful ally in improving patient care. See below for tips, checklists for social media outreach during National Advocacy Week and sample posts.

Social Media Tips--Make a Plan!

- 1) Each day, it is essential to have someone dedicated to social media
- 2) Kick Off the Week with a few posts, Instagram Stories and Reels, TikToks, tweets, etc.
 - a) Announce your plans at the beginning of the week → Change your Profile Pic/Cover Photos (download National Advocacy Week graphics from our web page)
 - b) What is National Advocacy Week?
 - c) What have you planned? Tell folks to follow your journey!
 - d) What is the AMA advocating for? Why should people care?
 - e) Why should students advocate as future physicians?
 - f) Why are you advocating as an AMA med student?

3) Take Photos

- a) Don't be afraid to move to the front to take high-quality pictures or videos of your guests/members
- b) Take pictures/videos of individuals interacting or asking questions
- c) Avoid pictures and videos of audiences, large unfilled rooms, or backs of heads
- d) Get a picture with the guest after the event (especially at a Congressional office!)
- 4) Prepare Posts: make them "public" → the AMA Social Media Team will be amplifying select posts throughout the week!
 - a) Use sample posts
 - b) Capture notable quotes from your speaker and post with pictures
 - c) Post a notable statistic or reflection from the event
 - d) Share a relevant story from your life
 - e) Discuss the importance of medical student advocacy

5) Where to post?

- a) Your medical school class page
- b) Your school's AMA page/GroupMe → Take over your school's social media page → ask admin!
- c) Your AMA Region Facebook page, GroupMe, or other communication channels
- d) Your state MSS Facebook page
- e) AMA Med Students Facebook Group
- f) Twitter/Instagram/TikTok
- g) Stories (Insta, FB, Snap \rightarrow Tag AMA!)

- 6) Hashtags and @s
 - a) #MSSAdvocacyWeek
 - b) Like/Follow AMA Pages → Tag AMA in your posts/stories so the Social Media Team can share!
 - ❖ Twitter: @AmerMedicalAssn @AMAmedstudents
 - ❖ Facebook: @AmericanMedicalAssociation @AMAmedstudents
 - ❖ Insta: @AmerMedicalAssn
 - ❖ Tag other people of interest if you'd like!
- 7) Make sure participants sign up for AMA Membership!
- 8) Keep me posted at kylee.borger@ama-assn.org or 202-789-7424 (office phone) or feel free to follow me on Twitter and Instagram (@kyleemadb)
 - a) At least two posts a day is a great goal → Leverage as many platforms as possible!

Educate Yourself on the Issues

This document is for you to learn about the issues we will be focusing on during National Advocacy Week. The below information is <u>for your own information only</u>. When communicating with your Congressional representatives, use the official issue briefs (linked on our web page) to give to or send as follow-up. When speaking on behalf of the American Medical Association, we are able to make a large impact by communicating the same, effective messages to legislators. The issue briefs are created based on what message is resonating on Capitol Hill and is in line with what AMA lobbying staff is communicating.

Improve future financial security for students

In 2020, about 42 million Americans, or one in eight, had student loans with the entire amount of student debt equaling around \$1.5 trillion. With Americans feeling the weight of student loan debt, many choose to forgo contributing to their retirement plans, jeopardizing their future financial security. The Retirement Parity for Student Loans Act would permit 401(k), 403(b), SIMPLE, and governmental 457(b) retirement plans to make voluntary matching contributions to workers as if their student loan payments were salary reduction contributions. For example, if someone pays \$300 in student loans in a given month, their employer could contribute \$300 or a percentage to their retirement account.

Of the outstanding \$1.5 trillion in student loan debt, about 25 percent of those borrowers went to graduate school and account for half of the outstanding debt. Specifically, in 2019, 73 percent of medical students graduated with an average of about \$200,000 in student loan debt. This number will significantly increase as the cost of medical school goes up every year. In fact, for first year students in 2020-2021, the average cost of attendance increased from the prior year for public medical schools by 10.3 percent, making it likely that medical students will have to carry even larger student loans in the future in order to graduate. With medical students being forced to take on low-paying residency and fellowship positions for up to eight years post-graduation, this generation of students is having to choose between paying back student loans or contributing to their retirement.

A study found that student debtors save significantly less for retirement than non-debtors by age 30 and that this gap continues to grow over the student debtors' lifetime. Moreover, 73 percent of Americans say they expect to begin, or increase, their retirement contributions once their student loans are paid off. However, with most Americans unable to pay off student loans until they are in their 40s, decades will pass before individuals are able to invest for their retirement. By delaying saving for retirement, individuals miss out on many of the long-term benefits of compound interest, which will either force them to have to save about 40 percent of their income, if they begin investing for their retirement in their 40s, in order to adequately support themselves in their retirement, or lead to an unsustainable reliance on Social Security, which itself is under threat of being depleted by 2037. Comprehensive solutions are needed to ensure that this generation and generations to come can properly save for retirement throughout their career.

The Retirement Parity for Student Loans Act would permit 401(k), 403(b), SIMPLE, and governmental 457(b) retirement plans to make voluntary employer-matching contributions to workers as if their student

loan payments were salary reduction contributions. This bill - H.R.2954 - Securing a Strong Retirement Act of 2021 has passed the House of Representatives and our efforts for National Advocacy Week will be utilized to urge your senators to cosponsor and support S. 4808, the "Enhancing American Retirement Now Act"

Tell the Senate to extend Medicare Telehealth payment and regulatory flexibilities through the end of 2024

The COVID-19 public health emergency has made clear that there are longitudinal benefits of telehealth, even in moments where there is not an acute public health crisis. Telehealth can help increase access to care in rural and underserved populations. For example, prior to COVID, a 2016 study in the state of Texas demonstrated that telemedicine has expanded access to acute stroke care for 1.5 million Texans, with no evidence of racial or ethnic disparities.

However, unless Congress acts, most Medicare beneficiaries will abruptly lose access to these telehealth services 151-days after the public health emergency ends. That is because under section 1834(m) of the Social Security Act, Medicare patients must live in an eligible rural location, and travel to an eligible "originating site"—a qualified health care facility—in order to access telehealth services covered by the Medicare program. Congress authorized the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to waive these restrictions and in March 2022, Congress passed legislation to extend the telehealth flexibilities 151 days after the end of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE). While this provided certainty for 2022, the PHE is likely to end in 2023. Unless Congress acts again this year, Medicare beneficiaries may abruptly lose access to these services mid-year when the public health emergency ends. Physicians must weigh the costs of investing in the technological and clinical infrastructure required to maintain telehealth programs at scale against the uncertainty of when these telehealth policies may end.

On July 27, the House of Representatives by a vote of 416-12 passed the Advancing Telehealth Beyond COVID-19 Act (H.R. 4040) to provide a two-year extension through the end of 2024 of Medicare telehealth flexibilities. This overwhelming vote demonstrates that access to telehealth services remains a bipartisan issue and is highly valued by patients across the country.

During National Advocacy Week, the AMA is urging the Senate to pass a similar two-year extension of these important telehealth policies, while continuing to push for a permanent extension, that includes provisions to: lift provider and patient location limitations and remove in-person requirements for telemental health.

While our focus for National Advocacy Week is on convening medical students across the country to push for a two-year extension, the AMA recognizes that telehealth can result in better outcomes for patients in managing their chronic conditions and to <u>more quickly receive specialty care</u> in an emergency. Thus, the American Medical Association (AMA) also supports legislation that would permanently fix the originating site and geographic restriction on telehealth coverage for Medicare patients, thereby ensuring patients can continue to access telehealth services regardless of where they are located, including:

- H.R. 1332/S. 368, the **Telehealth Modernization Act of 2021**, which would lift the rural-only restriction and add any site where a patient is located as a potential originating site
- H.R. 2903/S. 1512, the **CONNECT for Health Act**, which would lift the rural-only restriction, add the home as an originating site, establish a process for the Secretary of the HSS to

add originating sites, and provide HHS with the permanent authority to waive section 1834(m) restrictions.

The AMA also supports H.R. 4058/S. 2061, the **Telemental Health Care Access Act**. This important, bipartisan bill would repeal a new requirement that a patient must see a provider in person within six months of receiving a mental health telehealth service. This medically unnecessary requirement was included in the December 2020 OMNIBUS legislation without vetting from expert stakeholders. Multiple studies indicate that there are no significant differences between telehealth and in-person care for adults with anxiety, depression, substance use disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder for symptom improvement, patient satisfaction, quality of life, and medication and treatment adherence. Requiring in-person interaction with no increase in quality of care decreases access to care and prevents patients from receiving needed mental health services. The Telemental Health Care Access Act should be repealed before it takes effect when the Public Health Emergency expires.

Utilize National Advocacy Week to urge your Senator to help ensure greater coverage certainty for telehealth services by supporting a two-year extension of telehealth flexibilities through the end of 2024, similar to House-passed H.R. 4040. In addition, ask your Members of Congress to cosponsor the following bills to provide permanent telehealth coverage:

- H.R. 1333/S. 368 the Telehealth Modernization Act of 2021
- H.R. 2903/S. 1512, the CONNECT for Health Act

Reducing prior authorization burdens

Prior authorization, or the practice of insurance companies reviewing and potentially denying coverage of medical services and pharmaceuticals prior to treatment, remains a principal frustration for physicians and jeopardizes patient care. According to a 2021 American Medical Association (AMA) survey, physicians complete an average of 41 prior authorizations per week, an administrative burden that consumes nearly two business days of physician and staff time. The burden has become so substantial that 40% of physician survey respondents hired staff to work exclusively on prior authorization requirements.

Medically necessary clinical services and prescriptions covered by health insurance plans should be administered without delay. Prior authorization undermines physicians' medical expertise and leads to considerable delays in patient care which can then lead to avoidable consequences for our patients' health. According to the 2021 survey, 93% of physicians reported care delays associated with prior authorization, and 82% said these requirements can at least sometimes lead to patients abandoning treatment. Failure to administer medically necessary care can and does lead to poor health care outcomes. Most startlingly, 34% of AMA survey participants reported that prior authorization led to a serious adverse event, such as hospitalization, disability and permanent bodily damage, or death, for a patient in their care.

Improving prior authorization in Medicare Advantage

Medicare Advantage refers to a group of plans that have existed since the 1970's including HMO's, PPO's, and others which contract a patient's traditional Medicare coverage to a commercial insurer. Rather than the traditional Medicare fee-for-service model, in Medicare Advantage plans the federal government pays a capitated rate to the insurer. These plans have been described as capable of controlling costs and do have important benefits to the patient: eliminate the need for supplemental coverage, set out-of-pocket maximums, and covered non-medical benefits. However, some challenges include limited provider networks, referral requirements, and--you guessed it--prior authorization. Patients in these plans utilize specialty care at lower rates, perhaps because of these barriers. Importantly, enrollment in these plans is growing and expected to reach 42% by 2028.

Since Congress is increasingly concerned about the negative impact of prior authorization on patients and physicians within federal health care programs, a bipartisan collection of House and Senate lawmakers introduced H.R. 8487, the Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act of 2022. This bill reduces

unnecessary delays in care by streamlining and standardizing prior authorization under the Medicare Advantage program, providing much-needed oversight and transparency of health insurance for America's seniors. In addition, the legislation incorporates all major elements of a 2018 consensus statement developed by leading physician, hospital, medical group, health plan, and pharmacy stakeholders. More specifically, the bill would:

- Require Medicare Advantage plans to implement electronic prior authorization
 programs that adhere to newly developed federal standards and are capable of
 seamlessly integrating into electronic health systems (vs. proprietary health plan
 portals), as well as establish real-time decision-making processes for items and
 services that are routinely approved.
- Mandate that plans report to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services on the extent of their use of prior authorization and the rate of approvals and denials.
- Require plans to adopt transparent prior authorization programs that are reviewed annually, adhere to evidence-based guidelines, permit gold carding, and include continuity of care for individuals transitioning between coverage policies to minimize any care disruptions.
- Hold plans accountable for making timely prior authorization determinations and providing rationales for denials.

H.R. 8487, the Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act of 2022 overwhelmingly passed the House of Representatives by a bipartisan voice vote on September 14 and is now heading to the senate. Our efforts for National Advocacy Week will be utilized to urge your senators to cosponsor and support S. 3018, a companion bill for H.R. 8487,

To access the AMA's prior authorization research and advocacy resources, visit ama-assn.org/prior-auth.

NEXT STEPS

Participating in and organizing events for National Advocacy Week is only one way to be involved in advocacy as a medical student. Below you will find more information to dive right in to support your medical student peers, future physician colleagues, and patients by supporting the AMA's mission to promote the art and science of medicine and the betterment of public health.

The first and most important step is to <u>become a member</u> of the American Medical Association. The AMA is a membership organization, which means that everything we do is supported by membership dues, including medical students. So, make sure you are a member - if you are not already - and encourage your friends and classmates to join too! (There's also free swag and study aids on the table if you join for all 4 years.)

After you are a member, continue to build on the foundation of your advocacy work that you laid during National Advocacy Week:

- Continue to build relationships with your local representatives
 - Attend events in your district and make sure you send a follow-up thank you email to your representative after meeting them
 - O Make sure to update AMA staff about how your meetings during National Advocacy Week went kylee.borger@ama-assn.org
- Become an <u>AMA Ambassador</u> and share about the AMA's work in areas you are interested in on social media
- Get involved in the Medical Student Section and explore leadership opportunities
- Continue to host advocacy-related events and workshops on your campus
 - Review the <u>MSS Local Campus Section GuideMSS Local Campus Section Guide</u> for tips on how to continue to grow your AMA local campus section at your school.
 - o Apply for the <u>Medical Student Outreach Program section involvement grant</u> to support your events
 - o Invite local representatives, community leaders, and AMA leaders to speak
- Advocate for health policy issues in Washington D.C. this March!
 - Experience Capitol Hill with medical students from across the nation at the 2023 AMA Medical Student Advocacy Conference in Washington, D.C. Get training on how to be a public health advocate, meet with legislators and affect real change in medicine. Plus, get a free headshot in your white coat! Learn more: ama-assn.org/mac

Use and share this Linktree with all the AMA advocacy-related links in one place!