



A HEALTH CARE AGENDA

Medicine's 2026 state policy priorities

State advocacy landscape 2026

The American Medical Association Advocacy Resource Center conducted a survey of medical societies across the country to identify the top issues that will define the 2026 state legislative sessions. The results—covering 64 organizations (including all 50 state medical societies and the District of Columbia)—reveal a unified, urgent and patient-focused health care agenda for the nation.

This executive summary captures those priorities and serves as a companion to the AMA's inaugural **State Advocacy Impact Report**, painting a comprehensive, nationwide picture of the policies shaping patient care—and the AMA's work in advancing them. The themes reflect the work of the AMA Advocacy Resource Center: from reforming insurer practices and fighting inappropriate scope of practice expansions to stabilizing Medicaid, shaping AI regulation, leading in workforce development and licensure modernization, and the preserving of the patient-physician relationship. The consensus across states underscores the essential role AMA plays in supporting every state and national medical specialty society as they confront these challenges in their own legislatures and regulatory bodies.

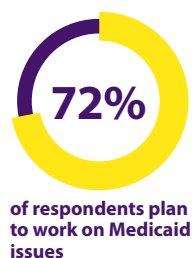
Key findings: The 2026 state policy landscape



1. Scope of practice tops the legislative agenda

Eighty-nine percent of respondents identified scope of practice as a top priority for 2026—the single most cited issue nationwide. Medical societies anticipate legislation pushed by a variety of **non-physicians seeking independent practice, prescriptive authority, and the unsupervised diagnosis and treatment of patients.**

The survey confirms that physicians across the country see protecting physician-led care as essential to patient safety and the stability of care teams. The AMA Advocacy Resource Center attorneys continue to serve as national experts for this work while the Scope of Practice Partnership provides critical financial resources to its members to strengthen their state advocacy.



2. Medicaid policy pressures intensify

Seventy-two percent of respondents will be deeply engaged in Medicaid legislation and/or regulation in 2026, with priorities including: **physician reimbursement** (top Medicaid issue), **funding and financing stability, redeterminations and coverage continuity, payment models, managed care reform,** and implementing new federally required **community engagement/work requirements.**

States report growing concern that low reimbursement and administrative complexity are driving patient access problems—issues central to the AMA's mission to promote the art and science of medicine and the betterment of public health.

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2/3
of respondents identify
physician workforce as
a top priority

67%
of respondents expect to
work on licensure issues

37
respondents expect to address
vaccines issues in 2026

3. Physician workforce challenges remain acute

Two-thirds of respondents identify physician workforce as a top priority, with strong emphasis on: **expanding residency positions, securing GME funding, resident retention programs** (e.g., loan repayment), and **alternative GME funding models**.

The data reinforce what the AMA Advocacy Resource Center team experiences daily: states are urgently seeking solutions to maldistribution and shortages that have intensified post-pandemic.

4. Medical licensure and telehealth continue to be high priorities

Sixty-seven percent of medical societies expect to work on medical licensure issues in 2026, reflecting efforts to create **additional licensing pathways for internationally trained and practicing physicians, adopt the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact**, and respond to increased interest in **licensure flexibility for cross-state care via telehealth**.

This mirrors the growing national conversation around workforce and telehealth.

5. Public health pressures persist amid political polarization

Public health ranks as a top-five priority with 33 states and four national medical specialty societies expecting to focus on **vaccination policy** (the top public health issue). Other 2026 state public health issues will include **reproductive health, tobacco/e-cigarettes, and end-of-life care**. Medical societies report sustained political challenges in these areas, requiring coordinated strategy and AMA resources.

Other hot topics for 2026

One Big Beautiful Bill Act: A defining 2026 implementation effort

The survey shows that most respondents (41 out of 63) anticipate working on One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) implementation in 2026. Medical societies plan to prioritize **Rural Health Transformation Program funding** (top issue), **Medicaid community engagement requirements, Medicaid enrollment and redeterminations, Medicaid financing and provider tax changes, and marketplace affordability**.

OBBBA implementation is poised to dominate health committees' time in a sizable number of states, representing one of the most expansive health policy efforts of the year.

Payer practices continue to strain physicians and their patients

Private health insurance reforms—including **prior authorization, network adequacy, claim denials, payment transparency and payer use of AI**—remain high on the list of 2026 priorities.

AI, data and competition policy expand the agenda

Advances in technology and changes in market structure continue to drive new legislative battles. A considerable number of states identified **AI and augmented intelligence policy, antitrust and competition, and data/EHR policy** as priority areas of focus for 2026.

What's next: A unified national agenda

Together with the AMA's first-ever **State Advocacy Impact Report**, our survey results present a compelling, evidence-driven narrative:

Medicine is clear on what must be done, aligned on the policies that matter most, and prepared—state by state—to advance a health care agenda that protects patients, strengthens the practice of medicine, supports physicians, and improves America's health.