



Welcome to Family Medicine Advocacy Rounds—the American Academy of Family Physicians' monthly tip sheet to educate, engage, and update you on the latest policy issues affecting family physicians and their patients.

Family Medicine Advocates Visit Capitol Hill



Why it matters:

Nearly 300 family physicians, residents, and medical students travelled to Washington, D.C., for the AAFP's Family Medicine Advocacy Summit. As part of the summit, they met with policymakers to discuss urgent health care issues affecting patients and practices. This included

ensuring adequate Medicare physician payment, strengthening the primary care workforce, and easing the administrative burden too many physicians face.

What we're working on:

- AAFP President Tochi Iroku-Malize, M.D.; Board Chair Sterling Ransone, M.D.; and President-elect Steven Furr, M.D., [wrote an op-ed in MedPage Today's KevinMD](#) about their experiences advocating for measures to strengthen the primary care workforce, reduce administrative complexity for clinicians, and make Medicare physician payment sustainable.
- The [AAFP recently submitted testimony](#) to the House Energy and Commerce Committee highlighting the need to create a more sustainable Medicare physician payment system to slow health care consolidation and protect beneficiaries' access to care. Our members [advocated for Congress to pass the Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act](#), which would strengthen Medicare for patients and clinicians.

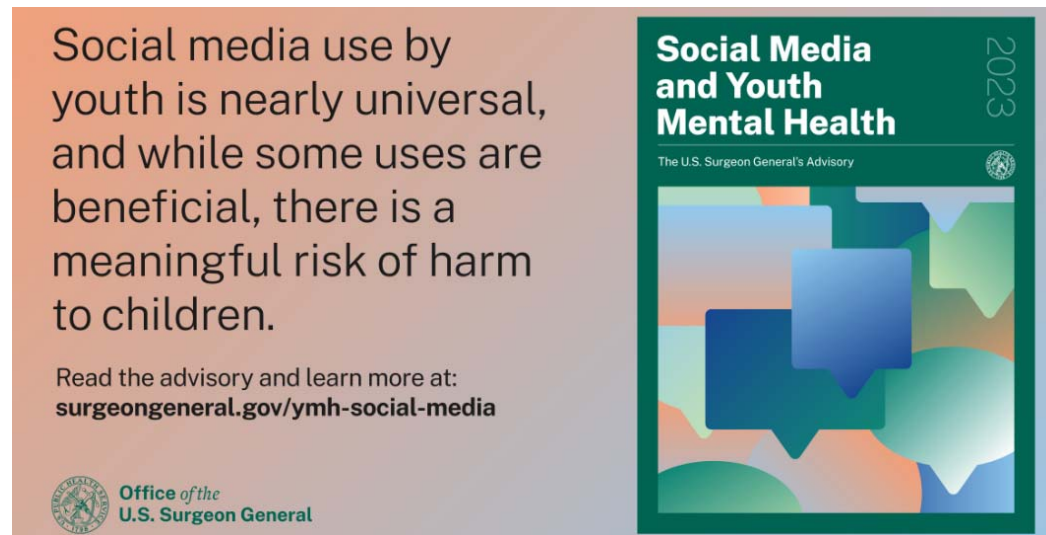
"Medicare's current physician payment system is undermining physicians' ability to provide high quality, comprehensive care – particularly in primary care. The AAFP is proud to endorse the Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act, which will help modernize Medicare physician payment, protect beneficiaries' access to care, and provide oversight of health care consolidation. The AAFP urges the House and Senate to swiftly pass this critical legislation."

Tochi Iroku-Malize, MD, MPH, FAAFP
President, American Academy of Family Physicians



- Family physicians urged policymakers to enact critical prior authorization reforms and called for the passage of the Safe Step Act to prevent inappropriate use of step therapy in employer-sponsored health plans and create a clear process for patients and physicians to seek reasonable exceptions to step therapy.
- Family physicians also urged Congress to pass legislation such as the DOC Act, which would permanently authorize and expand the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) program before it expires Sept. 30, and the Conrad State 30 and Physician Access Act, which allows foreign doctors studying in the U.S. to remain following their residency in exchange for practicing in medically underserved areas. These acts help ensure timely access to care for patients in underserved communities.
- Last week, the House Energy and Commerce Committee [advanced a bill](#) that would extend the THCGME program for six years—the longest in the program's history—and increase funding. The AAFP continues to advocate for permanent authorization.

AAFP Supports Surgeon General's Advisory on Social Media and Youth Mental Health



The AAFP supports a [new advisory](#) released by the U.S. Surgeon General linking increased social media use to compromised youth mental health. The advisory outlines immediate steps physicians, parents, and communities can take to mitigate the risk of harm to children and adolescents.

"Social media can be a powerful tool for connection, but it can also lead to increased feelings of depression and anxiety—particularly among adolescents. Family physicians are often the first stop for parents and families concerned about the physical and emotional health of young people in their lives, and we confront the mental health crisis among youth every day. The American Academy of Family Physicians commends the Surgeon General for identifying this risk for America's youth and joins our colleagues across the health care community in equipping young people and their families with the resources necessary to live healthy, balanced lives," [said AAFP president Tochi Iroku-Malize, M.D., M.P.H., FAAFP.](#)

Primary Care for America Brings Together Health Care Leaders, Innovators



In May, [leaders in the primary care community came together for the second annual PrimaryCare23](#) — a Primary Care for America conference. This year's event brought together leading health care thought leaders, innovators, and experts to discuss

- how to bridge primary care from the present to the future,
- evolving and strengthening the primary care workforce to meet growing demand,
- exploring the impact and importance of primary care,
- the massive role that primary care plays in promoting and facilitating access to care, and
- transforming health care delivery through innovation.

Primary Care for America advocates in partnership with innovative primary care organizations, united in their goal to provide high-quality, comprehensive, accessible primary care to all patients.

America's Leading Physician Groups Advocate for Access and Workforce Priorities



Why it matters:

Earlier this month, leaders from the AAFP, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Physicians, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Osteopathic Association visited Capitol Hill to advocate on behalf of the 600,000 physicians, residents, and medical students they represent.

What we're working on:

- Leaders engaged with members of Congress and their staffs about the urgent need to bolster the physician workforce, improve Medicare physician payment, and ensure Medicaid coverage for millions of patients. Specifically:

- The organizations urged passage of the Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act, which would ensure that Medicare physician payments are annually updated to keep pace with rising practice costs.
- America's leading physician groups are advocating for policies that protect the Medicaid program and to pass the [Kids' Access to Primary Care Act](#) to increase Medicaid payment rates.
- Amid burnout and staffing shortages, building a robust workforce is imperative. The Group of Six advocated for increased investments in programs including THCGME and the National Health Service Corps to ensure that physicians practice in communities where they are most needed.
- The Group of Six also recently [released a statement](#) firmly opposing any legislation seeking to implement Medicaid work requirements. The letter was picked up by the White House and media outlets including [NBC News](#).

AAFP Recognizes Mental Health Awareness Month



Why it matters:

Family physicians play a critical role in addressing mental health. They are often the first point of contact for patients seeking care and can provide screening, diagnosis, and treatment for mental health conditions. The AAFP consistently advocates for policies to better integrate mental health care and primary care for children and adults.

What we're working on:

- The [AAFP has a media resource hub](#) to equip media with resources, interviews, and advocacy information as they cover mental health.
- In recent video interviews, [AAFP Board Chair Sterling Ransone, M.D.](#), and [AAFP Board Member Mary Campagnolo, M.D.](#), talk about the importance of closing addressing the mental health crisis. Media outlets are free to use these interviews for broadcast or publication with credit to the AAFP.

- In an op-ed for Medical Economics, Dr. Ransone outlines how effective mental health treatment requires coordinating primary and behavioral health care.
- The AAFP [endorsed the Better Mental Health Care for Americans Act](#), which will promote primary care and behavioral health integration and expand access to mental health care for children. This legislation establishes an add-on payment for primary care physicians who have integrated behavioral health into their practices and establishes a Medicaid demonstration program to improve access to integrated care for children.

For the latest policy updates impacting family medicine, follow us at [@aafp_advocacy](#).



###

About American Academy of Family Physicians

Founded in 1947, the AAFP represents 129,600 physicians and medical students nationwide. It is the largest medical society devoted solely to primary care. Family physicians conduct approximately one in five office visits — that's 192 million visits annually or 48 percent more than the next most visited medical specialty. Today, family physicians provide more care for America's underserved and rural populations than any other medical specialty. Family medicine's cornerstone is an ongoing, personal patient-physician relationship focused on integrated care. To learn more about the specialty of family medicine and the AAFP's positions on issues and clinical care, visit www.aafp.org. For information about health care, health conditions, and wellness, please visit the AAFP's consumer website, www.familydoctor.org.