

ADVOCACY ALERT

Issue 1 | Spring 2024



PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Dear Colleagues,

As we navigate the complexities of our profession, it's paramount that we remain actively engaged in shaping the policies that govern our practice and impact our patients' lives. The Texas Chapter of the American College of Physicians Services (TXACPS) stands as a testament to this, embodying our collective dedication to advancing the field of internal medicine and addressing the multifaceted issues facing healthcare.

TXACPS operates under a structure designed to support and enhance the practice of internal medicine. Our board, consisting of elected members from various sectors of healthcare, oversees the strategic direction of the chapter. We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of medical practice and patient care, a charge set forth in our founding principles.

As the current President of TXACPS, I bring to our chapter a passion for clinical and academic excellence and a deep commitment to healthcare advocacy. With years of experience in both hospital and outpatient settings of West Texas, my approach to leadership is grounded in collaboration with physicians from all Texas's parts and practice settings. Our board members hail from the northern panhandle to the border. We aim to steer our chapter towards impactful initiatives that not only improve patient outcomes but also foster a supportive community for our physicians.

The legislative landscape is ever-evolving, with new challenges and opportunities continually arising. Each TXACPS member's participation is crucial. Through our combined efforts, we can effectively influence legislative processes and advocate for policies that promote the well-being of our patients and the integrity of our profession. It is through our active involvement and advocacy that we can shape outcomes beneficial to our profession and patients. Your engagement in committee roles, member meetings, and direct advocacy efforts are not just

valued; they are essential. We hope this quarterly newsletter serves to keep our members informed of the latest developments, share key insights and best practices, and foster a stronger sense of community and collaboration among our healthcare professionals.

I urge each of you to deepen your involvement in the TXACPS. Whether it is by participating in committee discussions, attending our annual meetings, or reaching out to your legislative representatives, your active participation is the key to our success.

Together, we can continue to make significant strides in healthcare and ensure that our voices are heard in the corridors of policy.

Warm regards,



Drew Payne, DO FACP
President,
Texas Chapter of the American College of Physicians Services





IN THIS ISSUE

Page 1 President's Address

Page 4 Health & Public Policy Committee

Page 4 Our Key Policy and Legislative Issues

Page 5 In the News

Page 5 Hot Topics

Page 5 American College of Physicians Alerts

Page 6 Reynold's Solution Legislative Update
for Texas ACP Members

Page 6 Lt. Governor Announces Interim
Charges

HEALTH & PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Last month, HPPC Chair, Roxanne Tyroch, MD, FACP of El Paso convened our inaugural HPPC meeting during which we demonstrated our profound commitment, enthusiasm, and expertise across all pertinent policy matters. This cycle we have an especially strong committee of 31 physicians from across the state and different practice and business models and years of practical experience to guide the chapter's advocacy efforts at the Capitol. In addition to our collective dedication, we are fortunate to have enlisted the guidance of a seasoned lobbyist. Their invaluable insights and recommendations will undoubtedly empower us to champion the needs and interests of our patients, enhance our practice, and elevate our profession through strategic advocacy initiatives.



OUR KEY POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

As we move forward in 2024, our collective effort to influence healthcare policy in Texas remains a top priority. The Texas ACP Services has outlined several legislative priorities that aim to enhance the practice environment for Internal Medicine Physicians and improve patient care across our state. As the 2025 Session nears, we will continue to refine components to reflect the political viability of each issue to make the most of our efforts. Here's a brief overview of our focused advocacy efforts:

- **Protecting the Patient-Physician Relationship:** We are committed to supporting policies that safeguard the crucial patient-physician relationship, including access to comprehensive women's healthcare and maintaining appropriate scope of practice standards for non-physician healthcare professionals.
- **Ensuring Access to Care:** Our advocacy will focus on preserving telehealth services access, enhancing behavioral health integration into primary care, improving Medicaid participation policies, and supporting ACA plan enrollments through premium support and tax credits.
- **Valuing Internal Medicine Physicians:** Recognizing the invaluable care provided by internal medicine physicians, we aim to advocate for fair compensation, including adjustments for inflation and support for the transition to value-based care models.
- **Increasing Prescription Drug Access and Affordability:** We support policies that promote pricing transparency and increase the accessibility, affordability, and availability of prescription medications.
- **Strengthening the Primary Care and Physician Workforce:** By seeking increased funding for programs like the General Internal Medicine Statewide Preceptorship Program and initiatives supporting rural and underserved area practices, we aim to expand the primary care physician workforce in Texas.
- **Supporting Health Information Technology:** We advocate for leveraging technology, including augmented intelligence, to enhance patient care and reduce administrative burdens, ensuring equitable use of technology.
- **Reducing Administrative Burden:** Our efforts include pushing for streamlined healthcare administrative processes to prioritize patient care, particularly by improving prior authorization procedures.
- **Preventing Firearms-Related Injuries and Deaths:** We advocate for investments in research and evidence-based policy reforms to reduce firearms-related injuries and deaths.

Our legislative agenda reflects our commitment to advancing the practice of internal medicine and ensuring the health and wellbeing of all Texans. Your support and active participation in these advocacy efforts are vital. Together, we can make a significant impact.

IN THE NEWS

Medicaid Extended Postpartum Coverage

Governor Greg Abbott and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) have extended Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) postpartum coverage from two to twelve months after childbirth. Effective March 1, 2024, this initiative aims to offer comprehensive healthcare to about 137,000 Texas mothers in fiscal year 2025, underlining a significant commitment to maternal health. For ACP members, this extension is an unprecedented opportunity to enhance postpartum care, ensuring Texas mothers receive the necessary medical support during this crucial period. As internal medicine physicians and specialists, we are ideally positioned to utilize this expanded coverage to provide continuous, quality healthcare, significantly impacting maternal health outcomes across the state.

TXACPS, TAFP, TPS and TMA physicians were invited to join a zoom presentation with HHSC staffers who updated our group on status of the program, rules and requirements. The Commission shared helpful links [PostPartum Coverage Downloads](#) and [Information on Eligibility and Coverage](#).



ACP Policy Paper Examines Excessive Alcohol Use and Alcohol Use Disorders

A new policy paper published in *Annals of Internal Medicine*, "[Excessive Alcohol Use and Alcohol Use Disorders](#)" stresses that policymakers and public health officials have a critical role to play in reducing excessive alcohol use and alcohol use disorders. The new paper ACP reiterates that alcohol use disorder is a treatable chronic medical condition that should be addressed through evidence-based public health and health care initiatives.



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS ALERTS

Help the Texas Chapter maintain our gold chapter status: Join ACP's [Advocates for Internal Medicine Network](#). The College's continued success on Capitol Hill greatly depends upon year-round grassroots support from the over 15,000 members who volunteer as Advocates for Internal Medicine and communicate with their members of Congress on issues of importance to Internal Medicine Physicians, their patients, and medical students. AIMN is an excellent means for getting more members involved with ACP. ACP members are not required to have existing relationships with their members of Congress in order to enroll in AIMN and the program is open to all membership categories.

Join us on Capitol Hill. Last year over 2 dozen Texans joined their ACP colleagues in Washington DC for our Annual Leadership Day. We're hoping to meet and exceed our presence from last year. Join us May 14-16 and help us advocate ACP's legislative priorities to our Texas Congressional Delegation. [Information and Registration](#).

New ACP Clinical Guidelines Available with Recommendations for Newer Pharmacological Treatments for Adults with Type 2 Diabetes

Annals of Internal Medicine published an updated version of ACP clinical guideline on [Newer Pharmacological Treatments in Adults with Type 2 Diabetes](#). The ACP guideline is based on systematic reviews of the benefits, harms, and cost-effectiveness of newer pharmacological treatments for Type 2 diabetes. This guideline also includes a video component featuring Dr. Carolyn Crandall, Chair of ACP's Clinical Guidelines Committee.

REYNOLDS SOLUTIONS LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FOR TEXAS ACP MEMBERS



David Reynolds

Public Affairs Consultant,
Texas Chapter of the American
College of Physicians Services

The post reconstruction constitutional reforms of 1876 were meant to harness the preceding 'carpet bagger' federalist efforts going forward. Among those reforms was a constitutional cap on when the state legislature could meet: every two years for 140 consecutive days; contemporaries suspect a transcription error-the section should have read 'two days every 140 years' This also assures a citizen legislature, and the relatively meager salaries and per diems further limit the possibilities of careerizing-although many have tried. However, in a diverse state demographically, geographically and economically, leaves a lot of unresolved issues on the negotiating table or stuck in the various legislative pipelines, not to mention the failures and unintended consequences of laws revised or enacted. Meanwhile a 140 day session doesn't include the reality that the earth continues to rotate on its axis and spins the unexpected into Texas.

Interim 'studies' are Legislators' means of coping with those eventualities. The motives and need for interim meetings are several and can be part of a directive (charge) by leadership to standing committees, established by legislation, or created as special task forces, sometimes jointly with both chambers. The most common reasons are mostly common sense:

- Prepare complex legislative needs outside the pressure chamber of the 140 day marathon and then a hard sprint, to build a consensus, mitigate special interest or partisan conflicts;
- Save face and buy time for issues that have political constituencies (lobbies, movements, 'special' interests) but stalled for lack of support; the legislative equivalent of a mulligan;
- Raise threshold awareness for complex issues that may not be ready to be dropped in the legislative hopper. These are more strategic- a long game to probe resistance, public perceptions, and assess legislators' grasp of the issue(s); and,
- Respond to problems that cropped up or matured post adjournment.

These interim efforts typically require a formal report to the Legislature with recommendations signed by the interim or special committees and can include dissenting votes in the form of a minority report.



Suleiman Lalani, MD Takes Care of Business in his Primary Race

Representative Suleiman Lalani, MD of Sugar Land and ACP member who practices Geriatric Medicine in Ft Bend County was elected to serve in the Texas Legislature last year. He had a successful session helping to protect the patient-physician relationship, getting more kids and mothers on Medicaid, and becoming a trusted voice on healthcare legislation.

We are fortunate having an Internal Medicine Physician's perspective while healthcare bills are debated on the House Floor.

Lalani has a challenger in the November General Election. We'll be reporting on this important race in the coming months.

LT. GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES INTERIM CHARGES

On April 11, [Lt Governor Patrick released a total of 57 charges to Senate Committee's to investigate and make recommendations](#) as he intends that the Senate will take up and consider next year. I've pulled several of interest to TXACPS. The HPPC will be evaluating each charge to determine our strategies of engagement.

SENATE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

- Children's Mental Health: Review care and services currently available to the growing population of Texas children with high acuity mental and behavioral health needs. Make recommendations to improve access to care and services for these children that will support family preservation and prevent them from entering the child welfare system.
- Access to Health Care: Evaluate current access to primary and mental health care. Examine whether regulatory and licensing flexibilities could improve access to care, particularly in medically underserved areas of Texas. Make recommendations, if any, to improve access to care while maintaining patient safety.

- Children's Mental Health: Review care and services currently available to the growing population of Texas children with high acuity mental and behavioral health needs. Make recommendations to improve access to care and services for these children that will support family preservation and prevent them from entering the child welfare system.
- Access to Health Care: Evaluate current access to primary and mental health care. Examine whether regulatory and licensing flexibilities could improve access to care, particularly in medically underserved areas of Texas. Make recommendations, if any, to improve access to care while maintaining patient safety.
- Health Insurance: Examine the Texas health insurance market and alternatives to employer-based insurance. Identify barriers Texans face when navigating a complex health insurance market. Make recommendations that help individuals obtain health care coverage.
- Cancer Prevention: Identify and recommend ways to address the growing impact of cancer on Texans by evaluating state investments in cancer prevention and screenings including, but not limited to, "CT," "MRI," and "PET" scans. Study and make recommendations on funding adequacy for prevention efforts at the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT).
- Monitoring: Monitor the implementation of legislation addressed by the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services passed by the 88th Legislature, as well as relevant agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction. Specifically, make recommendations for any legislation needed to improve, enhance, or complete implementation of the following: Senate Bill 7, Third Called Special Session, relating to prohibiting a private employer from adopting or enforcing certain COVID-19 vaccine mandates; authorizing an administrative penalty; Senate Bill 25, relating to support for nursing-related postsecondary education, including scholarships to nursing students, loan repayment assistance to nurses and nursing faculty, and grants to nursing education programs; Senate Bill 26, relating to local mental health authority and local behavioral health authority audits and mental and behavioral health reporting, services, and programs; Initiatives to reduce Medicaid fraud, waste, and abuse, as well as other cost containment strategies; and, Medicaid managed care oversight and accountability.



SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

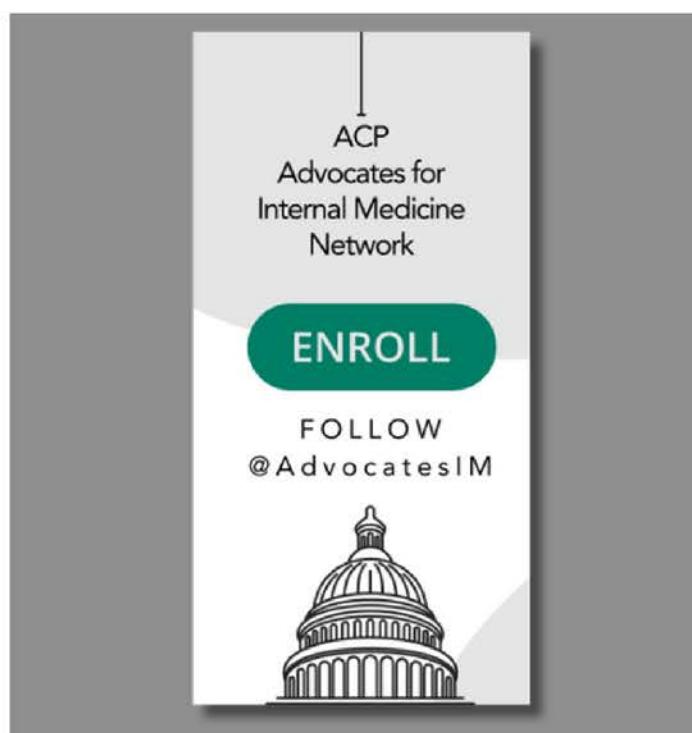
Mental Health Services and Inpatient Facilities: Monitor the implementation of Senate Bill 30, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, with regard to appropriations made for expanding mental health services and inpatient facilities across the state. Report on the progress of inpatient facility construction projects. Assess and report on the effectiveness of spending on mental health services.

SENATE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Banning Delta 8 and 9: Examine the sale of intoxicating hemp products in Texas. Make recommendations to further regulate the sale of these products, and suggest legislation to stop retailers who market these products to children.

SENATE VETERAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Veteran Mental Health: Review current programs that provide direct and indirect mental health services to veterans in Texas. Identify barriers to accessing mental health resources for rural veterans. Make recommendations to improve access to mental health support for all veterans.



TEXAS ACPS MEMBERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE: NOMINATE A COLLEAGUE FOR THE SNYDER/CHUMLEY ADVOCATES OF THE YEAR.



Scan the QR Code to
Submit your Nomination
for the Advocate Award

TXACPS is doing better than alright and fortunate for our many members who are politically active locally, plus at the state and national levels. Internal Medicine Physicians are committed to improving the healthcare outcomes to our patients. Many are comfortable working behind the scenes quietly or ready to take the mic and stage leading the charge in making an indelible difference. Do you know anybody fitting that description? We want to know and we want their peers and colleagues to know. Consider nominating someone you admire for the Snyder/Chumley Advocate of the Year Award. The Snyder/Chumley Award recognizes a member advocate in the chapter who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in the areas of legislative advocacy and grassroots activism. The Advocate of the Year has consistently communicated concerns on behalf of TXACPS to elected officials on issues and unfailingly responded to legislative alerts, as well as served as a community spokesperson on behalf of internal medicine and patients. Nominations due July 1st.



American College of Physicians Services | Texas Chapter

ADVOCACY ALERT

Issue 1 | Spring 2024