



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 Physicians Respond to Health Provisions in End of Year Legislative Package



The AAFP is encouraged that the legislative package that will fund the federal government through March 2025 includes several health care provisions that will improve patient outcomes, bolster the family physician workforce and increase access to primary care. [Read our statement here.](#)

The AAFP supports:

- Partial relief from Medicare physician payment cuts in 2025. However, short-term patches limit meaningful investment in the primary care workforce.
 - We continue to advocate alongside the entire physician community in support of long-term reforms, including an annual inflationary update to Medicare physician payment based upon the Medicare Economic Index.
- Extension the advanced alternative payment model incentive payment to help accelerate the transition to value-based care, which has been shown to improve patient outcomes

and lower spending.

- A five-year reauthorization of the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education program—the longest in the program’s history.
- A two-year reauthorization of the National Health Service Corps and increased funding for community health centers, which will help attract and retain physicians in rural and medically underserved communities.
- Extension of Medicare telehealth flexibilities through the end of 2026.
- Reauthorization of the SUPPORT Act, which ensures that trained family physicians can continue to provide necessary care to patients, including substance use disorder treatment.

AAFP to Congress: Support Value-based Patient Care

Why it matters: As we prepare to transition to the 119th Congress, family physicians are making their voices heard: Inadequate Medicare payment rates have created untenable barriers to care for patients and threaten physician practices. While the final 2025 Medicare physician fee schedule aims to strengthen primary care, the underlying deterioration of physician payment negates the impact of these important investments.

This is the fifth year in a row that congressional intervention will be needed to preserve payment. The consequences of this year’s 2.8% reduction are dire, putting practices at risk, exacerbating physician workforce shortages and preventing patients from accessing primary care.

Without an annual inflationary update from Congress, this dangerous cycle will continue and further weaken access to care, increase costs and endanger our primary care physician workforce. [Read the AAFP’s response to the 2025 MPFS final rule.](#)

What we’re working on:

- The AAFP [wrote to congressional leadership](#) alongside other health organizations urging passage of an end-of-year health care package that includes an extension of Medicare’s Advanced Alternative Payment Model (AAPM) incentive payments and an inflationary update aligned with the Medicare Economic Index.
- The letter also highlighted how growing participation in value-based payment models and extending the reach of APMs to new patient populations, as well as to rural and underserved communities, can improve access to care and reduce costs.
- The AAFP looks forward to working with lawmakers on long-term solutions to improve Medicare’s physician payment system and encourage greater participation in APMs.

Lorna Breen Act Saves Lives, Protects Health Care Workers



Why it matters: Just as patients do, physicians need access to behavioral health support and treatment. Millions of health care professionals across the country have benefited from the vital support offered through the initial authorization of the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act of 2022. It is the first and only federal law dedicated to preventing suicide and reducing occupational burnout, mental health conditions and stress for health care professionals.

What we're working on:

- Health care professionals still face higher rates of mental health and behavioral health conditions, occupational burnout and suicide than other professions.
- These factors are worsening physician shortages and negatively affecting patient care as experienced health care professionals leave the workforce in greater numbers and recruitment and retention of future generations becomes more difficult.
- The [AAFP and several other health care organizations urged Congress](#) to ensure that this vital legislation is reauthorized.

AAFP Joins Health Care Groups' Call to Increase HRSA Title VII and VIII Programs

Why it matters: The Health Services Resources Administration's (HRSA) workforce initiatives, known as Title VII and Title VIII programs, have proved successful in recruiting, training and supporting primary care physicians, mental health clinicians, nurses, public health practitioners, geriatricians and other frontline health care workers critical to addressing the nation's health needs.

Chronic underfunding for the HRSA Title VII and Title VIII programs will worsen health workforce shortages and hinder our nation's ability to educate current and future clinicians.

What we're working on:

- The [AAFP and several other health care organizations urged Congress](#) to support investments for HRSA programs that will sustain our health care workforce, including the Medical Student Education program.
- Increased investment in these programs is essential to helping address health workforce shortages in critical areas of need, and to shaping the future health workforce.
- The AAFP also recently wrote to HRSA's leadership and offered recommendations in support of strengthening their Primary Care Training and Enhancement Programs, and expanding Title VII funding specifically, to continue building the primary care workforce where its most needed.

CONGRATS!

Modern Healthcare's 100 Most Influential People in Health Care



**R. Shawn
Martin**

Executive Vice
President and Chief
Executive Officer



AAFP Executive Vice President and CEO R. Shawn Martin was recognized by *Modern Healthcare* as one of the 100 Most Influential People in Healthcare of 2024. This prestigious recognition program acknowledges and honors individuals who are deemed by their peers and the senior editors of *Modern Healthcare* to be the most influential figures in the industry, in terms of leadership and impact.

“During a time of transition and change, the AAFP is unwavering in our efforts to improve the health of patients, families and communities for years to come. I am honored to lead an organization that supports 130,000 family physicians — their job is one of the biggest and most important in health care,” Martin said. “There is much to do to improve access to primary care, and I am humbled to be among this distinguished group of senior health care executives, government officials, academics, researchers and thought leaders shaping health care in the U.S.”

The complete ranking can be found in the Dec. 9 issue of *MH* magazine, and profiles of all the honorees can be found [here](#).

What We're Reading

- AAFP CEO and EVP R. Shawn Martin spoke to [Politico](#) about site-neutral payments. "We know that site-differential payments are a leading reason why independent physician practices are struggling to maintain financial viability in many communities," he said.
- AAFP President-elect Sarah Nosal, M.D., FAAFP, spoke to [HealthLeaders](#) about addressing obesity. "Unless we acknowledge this is a crisis across all communities, we will not mobilize resources, and we will not see a change," she said.
- The AAFP applauded CMS in [Modern Healthcare](#) for its continued distribution of new Medicare GME slots to primary care. "Addressing the primary care physician shortage will require a targeted approach. That's why the AAFP appreciates CMS' continued distribution of new Medicare GME slots, with almost half going to primary care specialties. This is a critical step toward advancing access to primary care in underserved communities and will help address the primary care physician shortage."

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



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About American Academy of Family Physicians

Founded in 1947, the AAFP represents 130,000 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