



THE MMS LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Advocacy in its many forms remains essential to the mission of the MMS. The Society addresses a diverse range of issues, from public health and preparedness to health equity and coverage policy. A variety of tactics and strategies are pursued to effect change, including live testimony before a legislative committee, coalition-based written campaigns, and direct advocacy with legislators and regulators.

It is with the dedication and commitment of your colleagues and staff that we strive every day to improve your ability to practice medicine and advance patient care.

What Lies Ahead for Our Advocacy

1. FUTURE OF MASSHEALTH

The MMS continues to monitor progress on MassHealth's plans for reforms through its 1115 Waiver, a process whereby MassHealth can appeal to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for innovative reform flexibilities. In particular, the MMS submitted testimony in support of reforms to primary care payment and behavioral health, and for potential coverage expansions for justice-involved persons.

2. PRIMARY CARE AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH REFORM

The MMS will continue to engage with the legislature as they decide whether to pursue reforms to primary care and behavioral health. If the legislature does, will these be broad-based reforms, seeking additional investments in each (as they were successfully implemented in Rhode Island), or will they detail changes to health care delivery and payment systems?

3. SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

With a rise in opioid-related overdose deaths — and stark racial disparities in the rates of increase — the MMS will continue to advocate for expanded low-barrier access to evidence-based treatment and harm-reduction programming, including supervised consumption sites.

4. SURPRISE BILLING

The MMS has encouraged federal agencies to promote the best possible implementation of the federal *No Surprises Act*. The MMS will advocate for the act to become the law of the land in Massachusetts or seek to establish a unique solution.

5. LESSONS LEARNED FROM COVID-19

The MMS will continue to closely follow legislative efforts to learn lessons from COVID-19. Will we see reforms to local health? Can we assure that the PPE shortages from 18 months ago will not be repeated? How do we ensure future crisis response plans address racial equity?

COVID-19 ADVOCACY: MMS AT WORK FOR YOU



MASSACHUSETTS
MEDICAL SOCIETY

The MMS advocacy team fights for policies that create an optimal environment for clinical care during the pandemic. Here are some important advocacy wins.

Liability Protection



MMS advocacy was key to the passage of state legislation for provider liability protection during the pandemic, including direct advocacy, letters and testimony, and organizing member outreach. The law provides civil immunity for health care providers and facilities providing medical care during the COVID-19 emergency. The MMS has urged Congress to enact similar protections federally.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)



We continue to actively lobby state and federal policymakers — through letters and meetings — for an equitable distribution of PPE, bolstering domestic production of PPE, and better management and oversight of government distribution channels.

Telemedicine



After our successful calls to expand telemedicine, we are working to maintain changes beyond the crisis. The MMS advocated for codification of comprehensive policy to ensure coverage and payment parity and for addressing barriers to equitable access to telemedicine, which were included in legislation passed so far by the state Senate. The MMS also advocated for federal coverage and reimbursement parity, including CMS's coverage for audio-only services.

Equity



As part of the statewide Task Force on Coronavirus & Equity, the MMS is identifying and promoting policies to address health and economic inequities exacerbated by the pandemic. The MMS has called on state and federal legislators to improve data collection on race, ethnicity, and other demographics to help address disparities in access to testing, treatment, and care.

Licensure



We succeeded in expanding temporary state licensure for international medical graduates (IMGs) and are urging BORIM to make permanent a policy to render IMGs eligible for full licensure after two years of postgraduate training approved by the ACGME or AOA. We advocated for federal legislation to recapture unused visas from previous years and policies to expedite visas already in process.

Financial Relief



The MMS worked with lawmakers to support financial relief for physician practices, including increased MassHealth reimbursement rates and advance payments. We urged federal policymakers to increase direct funding via HHS grants and ensure equitable distribution of funds. We achieved better payment terms for small business loans and continue advocacy for student loan debt relief.

Protecting Medicine



As part of the state's Reopening Provider Advisory Group, we contributed guidance for protecting medicine. We shared with state and federal policymakers our considerations and guidelines for reopening and recommendations for health care system improvements during and beyond the pandemic. We continue to urge federal leaders to increase testing capacity and accelerate contact tracing.

Help support critical advocacy needed to protect your profession and the care of your patients.

Become an MMS Member Today: massmed.org/membership