

Legislative Report - March 21, 2015

by Steve Lucero, Legislative Liaison

The Doc of the Day program, once again sponsored by NMAFP, was a tremendous success. Thirty-six physicians and resident physicians volunteered to be “on-call” at the Roundhouse during the session. The care given by the volunteer physicians was met with great appreciation by legislators, staff members, and the general public. Volunteers also had the opportunity to interact with legislators, participate in committee hearings, and advocate on behalf of bills of interest to the NMAFP.

With leadership from NMAFP member Melissa Martinez, MD and Lance Chilton, MD of the NM Pediatric Society, Senate Bill 121 “The Vaccine Purchasing Act”, sponsored by Senator Bill O’Neill, passed the Senate and the House unanimously. The Governor signed the bill on March 20, 2015. This bill fixes a problem that created a 2.5 million dollar shortfall in the Department of Health’s vaccine for children program. Under the new law, insurance companies will be required to reimburse the Department of Health for vaccines given to their insured children or face a penalty.

Three other bills of interest to NMAFP passed both chambers of the legislature and are now awaiting action by the Governor:

Senate Bill 325 “Health Agreement No-Compete Provisions”, sponsored by Senator Stuart Ingle, would make clauses that limit a provider’s ability to practice medicine in a community unenforceable while allowing clauses that allow for liquidated damages to repay costs such as signing bonuses, relocation costs, or payment of student loans as stipulated in an agreement.

House Bill 122 “Scope of Practice Act”, sponsored by Representative Terry McMillan, would create an interim committee of legislators to hear scope of practice request changes and make their recommendations to the legislature. A licensee would make a request to their licensing board, then the licensing board would have 10 days to inform Legislative Council Services for the process to begin.

Senate Bill 571 “Physical Therapy Treatment & Board”, sponsored by Senator Benny Shendo, would allow physical therapists to accept patients without an existing medical diagnosis from a licensed primary care provider. There is a provision in the bill that requires a physical therapist to refer a patient to their licensed physician if the physical therapist believes the patient has a condition that is beyond their scope of practice or if the patient’s condition does not improve after 30 days of treatment.

Special thanks goes out to Randy Marshall and the NM Medical Society for arranging coverage for many of the prescriptions made by the volunteer docs and also for Randy’s generous sharing of information regarding healthcare bills and the legislative process.