

House of Delegates Report

Report of the Government Affairs Director

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Trenton has returned almost back to pre-COVID times in terms of committee hearings and voting sessions open to the public. There are some virtual meetings that are continuing as a convenience to provide greater access for public comment on areas including the Budget review. Trenton just began a new two-year legislative session in January and NJAFP is tracking all the new bills introduced every week.

2021 ELECTION UPDATE – The biggest change for the new session was the loss of the Senate seat held by Senate President Steve Sweeney, who was a strong advocate for physicians and primary care. Senate President Nick Scutari is the new Senate President and NJAFP has already met with him and his chief of staff and policy staff to discuss his health care agenda and primary care.

COVID-19 VACCINE DISTRIBUTION: As you are aware from last year's HOD report NJAFP spent a significant amount of its advocacy, public relations and other resources working with NJDOH on the inclusion of primary care practices in the state's vaccine distribution from primary doses to boosters. NJAFP remains in regular contact with the NJDOH Commissioner and her staff, including Drs. Adinaro and Montana, on vaccine distribution and has intervened specifically at the request of individual NJAFP members when they encountered any difficulties with the process.

AAFP STATE GOVERNMENT ADVOCACY AWARD: NJAFP

NJAFP was awarded the State Government Advocacy Award for our advocacy on the role of family medicine during the COVID-19 pandemic and COVID-19 vaccine distribution to primary care practices. Examples of our reach and presence in the media during COVID can be viewed here: <https://njafp.org/njafp-in-the-news/>.

NJ ACCESS TO CARE COALITION – SCOPE OF PRACTICE

NJAFP continues collaborating with over eighteen medical specialty societies through the Access to Care Coalition. The focus of this group for this legislative session is scope of practice and rebranding/messaging our scope advocacy. APNs have introduced legislation this session to remove collaboration and joint protocol agreements with physicians in order to practice independently. It is top priority of NJAFP's advocacy to educate policymakers on the value of the team-based model of care.

TELEMEDICINE SUCCESS: NJAFP successfully promoted Telemedicine legislation that was signed by the Governor. This law (S-2559/A4179) provides parity in payment and codifies relaxation of telemed rules for state regulated plans, Medicaid, NJ Family Care, State health/employee benefits plans. New Jersey was one of the first states to accomplish this goal!

COVID EXECUTIVE ORDERS: NJAFP is working hard to remove the remaining COVID restrictions on physician practices as it relates to patient screening, masking, waiting room space . . . etc. Health care is the sole hold out on state COVID restrictions.

PRIMARY CARE INVESTMENT: This advocacy initiative was put on hold until mid-2021. In June 2021 NJAFP was able to secure language in the 2021-2022 state budget that requires Medicaid, Family Care and the state health plans to calculate and publish its current investment in primary care – how much do these programs spend on primary care services as a percentage of total spend. As a result of this progress in our advocacy, AAFP awarded NJAFP a \$10,000 Primary Care Investment Grant to support our work going forward.

Using some of the grant funding we partnered with NJ Health Care Quality Institute and co-sponsored a Primary Care Investment Webinar with the target audience being our members and the state departments charged with publishing primary care spend (Department of Human Services/Division of Medicaid and Division of Treasury). This program had significant reach beyond New Jersey, as well. We are providing the state a playbook to help them through this process. A recording of the webinar can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XuaLOWGD2iw>

MEDICAID PARITY

With the state flush with funds from a variety of sources, NJAFP is working to increase Medicaid FFS and MCO payments for primary care services to at least Medicare levels. This is very new, and more updates will be shared with the Board during our next meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
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Government Affairs Director