



## 2023-2024 Pennsylvania Osteopathic Medical Association (POMA) Public Policy Platform

### Pennsylvania DOs

The Pennsylvania Osteopathic Medical Association (POMA) represents all Osteopathic physicians and their patients throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine, or DOs, are fully licensed physicians who practice in all medical specialties. Emphasizing a whole-person approach to treatment and care, DOs are trained to listen and partner with their patients to help them get healthy and stay well.

DOs receive special training in the ways the musculoskeletal system, affects the body. By combining this knowledge with the latest advances in medical science, they offer patients the most comprehensive care available in medicine today.

Osteopathic physicians focus on prevention, tuning into how a patient's lifestyle and environment can impact their wellbeing. DOs strive to help their patients be truly healthy in mind, body and spirit — not just free of symptoms.

### DO Wellness Means Better Patient Care

Most POMA members when asked, shared that physician stress, mental health and quality of life were their most critical challenges. DOs are great at taking care of Pennsylvania patients but can find it difficult to make time to care for themselves given the demands of their practice. For these reasons, POMA advocates to alleviate the unnecessary practice stressors that serve as barriers between a DO and his or her patients.

### DO Partnership with Lawmakers and Policy Makers

In order for Pennsylvania DOs to continue their good work treating patients in Pennsylvania, POMA partners with legislators and policy makers to coordinate efforts towards creating a physician practice landscape that is conducive to strong quality patient care. This means eliminating or not creating practice barriers that do not serve to enhance patient care including well-intended, but sometimes onerous insurance requirements and practice mandates. Protecting the DO-patient relationship by making well-informed decisions on scope of practice

issues is another strong point under POMA's advocacy. And, by protecting physicians from exposure to liability and economic damages for providing evidence-based patient care.

## **POMA Positioning**

### **Scope of Practice**

DOs throughout the Commonwealth work with most all healthcare professionals on a daily basis treating patients as a team. DOs respect and rely on their talents and expertise treating patients in a team-focused environment. POMA will continue to work in good faith with legislators, policy makers and pertinent stakeholders towards modernizing healthcare professionals' respective scope of practices in the Commonwealth. However, POMA does not support the independent practice of medicine by non-physician providers. POMA believes that the patient should be the center of the care team, with the physician leading the team.

**POMA Supports** legislation that was negotiated and agreed to by the Pennsylvania Coalition of Nurse Practitioners in the last legislative session that would establish a 6-year pilot program for certified registered nurse practitioners (CRNPs) to practice in health professional shortage areas (HPSAs) without a collaborative agreement.

- The negotiated agreement provides the CRNPs with exactly what they lobbied for, which is to go to the rural parts of the Commonwealth to provide access to care without a collaborative agreement.
- The agreement also provides oversight of a committee of two actively practicing CRNPs, a DO and an MD, also in active practice, to guide the pilot program.
- The agreement includes a rigorous study on the outcomes of the pilot project over the 6-year period and a public report.

### **DO Bureaucratic Practice Relief**

**POMA Supports** legislation that ends balance billing by insurers, taking the patient out of the middle, and paying DOs a fair reimbursement for services provided.

**POMA Supports** legislation that would provide structure for telemedicine practices in the Commonwealth and reimburse DOs for patient care rendered.

### **Liability and Economic Protections for DOs**

DOs are one of these most regulated professions in the state. DOs must know all private insurance carriers and specific products in order to properly bill for the care of their patients. DOs must know all the byzantine laws and regulations for Medicare and Medicaid to treat patients on these public health programs. Although DOs always strive to provide evidence-

based quality care to our patients they may be faced with baseless medical liability actions. DOs are advocating to protect them from increased liability and pleading with lawmakers and policymakers to not add new burdens that threaten and punish DOs in providing the best care they can for their patients.

### POMA Supports

- POMA Supports legislation that would provide jurisdiction over court venue and what counties a liability action can be filed. POMA is disappointed that the State Supreme Court eliminated the venue rule for medical liability actions that must be brought in the County where the complaint took place.
- Ending the venue rule will result in increased payouts and increased insurance costs for Osteopathic physicians as trial lawyers will drag cases into counties known for high jury awards.
- The General Assembly needs to assert its right to provide for jurisdiction in court cases.

POMA Opposes legislation that would enact a state False Claims Act to mirror the federal law.

- Under a state false claims act, DOs who treat patients in the Medical Assistance program would be subject to further scrutinization and economic penalties for billing errors.
- DOs DO NOT SUPPORT FRAUD! However, the difference between fraud and innocent billing mistakes over time, should not be equated with one another. This is what can happen with a state false claims act.
- Supporters of the legislation tout it as a fraud fighting mechanism, but the only stakeholder group that supports the legislation are the trial lawyer organizations because it will open another door of “open-season” on DOs.

## Public Health

DOs are conscientious physicians who recognize and understand the value that public health efforts can have on patient care. POMA supports legislation and policy that serves to further public health in the Commonwealth. POMA also opposes legislative efforts that would interfere with the physician-patient relationship and the physicians’ ability to provide evidence-based information and care to their patients.

POMA Supports the strengthening of two-way communication between physicians and providers who administer vaccinations and medications to patients.

- Pharmacists are currently required to report back to a patient’s physician when they provide an immunization to a patient. However, DOs report this does not happen with any regularity or uniformity in practice.

- DOs and the healthcare provider team should be able to know what medications and vaccines are being given to their patients in order to provide a complete medical record when treating and diagnosing their patients.
- Pennsylvania has a vaccination registry, but it is not user-friendly and often not useful because of lack of participation in reporting.
- DOs look to remedy these issues in the new legislative session.