



Thank You

As the pandemic stretches into its third year, SHM's Advocacy team wants to thank you for your continuous work caring for patients around the country. Between staffing shortages, COVID, influenza, and RSV surges, you continue to show up for your patients and the profession as a whole. Despite the challenges of this past year, you also joined us to contact and pressure your legislators, resulting in major policy wins throughout the year.

Cheers to you. We are wishing you a happy New Year!

Omnibus Package

The previous Congress passed an end of year omnibus package that was signed into law by President Biden on December 29th, 2022. Omnibus bills contain numerous provisions and policies in a single piece of legislation and are voted upon via a single vote. This omnibus included several of our policy priorities, outlined below.

Your action at the end of this year helped ensure the passage of this monumental legislation, securing key policy wins!

WIN: The Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment Act

As part of our efforts to address the opioid epidemic by reducing obstacle and stigma associated with OUD treatment, SHM supported the Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment (MAT) Act to for the past several Congressional sessions. The MAT Act eliminates the X-waiver to prescribe buprenorphine to treat opioid use disorder. Earlier in 2022, we worked to get the MAT Act included as part of a broad mental health package. While it ultimately passed in the House of Representatives, it did not get traction in the Senate. However, the MAT Act was included as part of the omnibus and is therefore now law. Your tireless support of this bill throughout last year maintained momentum for the MAT Act and helped secure its passage.



WIN: Telehealth Expansion

The expansion of telehealth services, as well as increased rates for telehealth reimbursement, has kept patients and clinicians safe throughout the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the rapid expansion of telehealth has expanded access to quality medical care in rural and underserved communities. SHM has consistently advocated for the continuation of telehealth reimbursement and expansion. The omnibus included a two-year extension of telehealth flexibilities, which will help ensure groups and individual practitioners have ample time to transition to a post-public health emergency (PHE) reality.

WIN: The Conrad State 30 and Physician Access Reauthorization Act

Bolstering the hospitalist workforce is necessary to ensure access to quality care for patients throughout the country. While the physician shortage is an issue that requires a multi-pronged approach to fully address, improving our skilled immigration system will help. The Conrad State 30 Program, established in 1995, allows resident physicians on a J-1 visa to remain in the United States and immediately apply for a H1-B visa if they work in an underserved area for a minimum of three years. Since the program's authorization, upwards of 15,000 physicians have been able to remain in the United States, providing care where it is most needed. SHM has been advocating on this topic for a number of years and we celebrate the extension of this vital program.

WIN: Partial Mitigation of Medicare Payment Cuts

Hospitalists and other providers who bill Medicare were slated an approximate 8% cut to their Medicare reimbursement rates, set to begin on January 1st. While Congress did not completely halt these cuts, the omnibus package did mitigate the effect of some of the cuts. Medicare providers can expect an approximate 2% cut to their payment in 2023. We are disappointed these cuts are going into effect and will continue to advocate for a fair, sustainable funding system for Medicare in the coming year.

WIN: Alternative Payment Model (APM) Incentives

The omnibus also included an extension of incentive payments for Advancement Alternative Payment Models (APM) participation through 2025 and a provision that will extend the current freeze on participation thresholds for qualification for the APM bonuses for an additional year. SHM has long criticized the thresholds for APM participation as being far out of reach of many hospitalists and believed the end of incentive payments will stall movement away from fee for service medicine. We applaud these changes.



WIN: Extending Hospital at Home Waiver

The omnibus bill extended the Acute Hospital at Home waiver initiative through December 31, 2023. Extending this program for an additional year will ensure beneficiaries have access to the highest quality care in the most appropriate setting and allow those hospitalists who are working in this model to continue their efforts.

Looking Forward

While we celebrate and enjoy major successes from the past year, we are already turning focus to the new 118th Congress. As we maintain the hospitalist voice in new policy and legislative discussions, we will continue our important work in bolstering the hospitalist workforce, advocating for a sustainable funding model for Medicare, improving observation policies, and streamlining prior authorization requirements.

Additional Updates

Extreme and Uncontrollable Circumstances Application Deadline Extended

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic disruptions in 2020 and 2021, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) automatically applied the Extreme and Uncontrollable Circumstances (EUC) exception for the Quality Payment Program (QPP). This automatically reweighted performance categories and protected clinicians from penalties in the program. However, as CMS moves toward regular operations of the QPP, the EUC exception will no longer be applied automatically. Participating providers or groups who would like to request an exception must complete the EUC application by March 3, 2023 for the 2022 QPP reporting year (2024 payment year). The original deadline of January 3, 2023 has been extended due to SHM and other stakeholder's advocacy efforts.

For more information and to apply for the exception, see <https://qpp.cms.gov/mips/exception-applications>.

CMS Releases Updated Conversion Factor for the 2023 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule

In response to concerted advocacy by organized medicine, Congress in the omnibus package reduced the 4.5% cut to Medicare physician payment by increasing the 2023 conversion factor by 2.5%. The updated 2023 Medicare physician payment schedule conversion factor will be \$33.8872. The previously finalized conversion factor was \$33.0607. The 2022 conversion factor was \$34.6062.

2022 YEAR IN REVIEW: ADVOCACY

ENSURING HOSPITALISTS AND THEIR PATIENTS HAVE A SEAT AT THE TABLE

KEY LEGISLATIVE ISSUES



PRIORITIZING CLINICIAN WELLNESS

President Biden signed the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act into law. This legislation authorizes grants for programs offering mental and behavioral health services for front-line health care workers.

STREAMLINING PRIOR AUTHORIZATION IN MEDICARE ADVANTAGE

Achieved passage of The Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act in the House of Representatives.





BOLSTERING THE HOSPITALIST WORKFORCE

A more sensible skilled immigration system will help ease staffing shortages and create stability for immigrant hospitalists. Notable SHM supported legislation includes: the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act and the recently passed Conrad State 30 and Physician Reauthorization Act.

COMBATING THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

The Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment Act has been passed as part of the omnibus package. This legislation will eliminate the X-waiver prescribing requirement for buprenorphine.



ADDRESSING REGULATORY PAIN POINTS

- Secured one year delay of the new CMS split (or shared) visits billing policy through CY2023 +
- Ensured continued Medicare reimbursement for Telehealth +
- Advocated for adequate Medicare reimbursement for inpatient services +
- Collaborated with other specialties to amplify the voice of hospital based clinicians +
- Mitigated Medicare payment cuts +



Empowering hospitalists.
Transforming patient care.