Dear all:

The 2018 General Assembly has finally concluded. Once again, we had a great legislative session because of your grassroots efforts. I want to personally thank you and our government relations team – Derek Norton, Bethany Sherrer, Christiana Craddock, Travis Lindley and all the county and specialty societies for their hard work this year.

Below is a brief summary of the results of our legislative priorities:

**Distracted Driving (Top Priority)**

HB 673 (Representative John Carson) passed the House of Representatives and Senate is off to the Governor for his signature. This bill requires the use of “hands free” technology when you are driving. There are associated penalties for failure to comply. MAG had a social media campaign and raised funds for this effort through our MAG Foundation. Thank you to Representative Carson for his work on the issue. Many thanks to Charles Wilmer, MD and Ali Rahimi, MD for their work on the issue. Thank you to the Medical Association of Atlanta (David Waldrep) and the MAG Alliance for their efforts. Thanks to Lori Murphy for her work on behalf of the MAG Foundation to raise money for the campaign.

**Surprise Insurance Coverage (Top Priority)**

HB 678 (Chairman Richard Smith) provided transparency for elective services in an effort to protect patients from a bill due to a lack of health insurance coverage. While Chairman Smith is commended for trying to address the issue, HB 678 failed to provide a comprehensive solution to protect the patient.

SB 359 (Chairman Chuck Hufstetler) provided a comprehensive solution to protect patients from “surprise bills” by addressing emergency and elective encounters. Thank you to Chairman Hufstetler for his work on trying to find a comprehensive solution.

While the language of both bills were placed on multiple other pieces of legislation (SB 8 and HB 314), none of the bills passed both chambers. As such, we have spoken to Chairman Smith and committed to continued discussions over the summer to work towards a solution. **Of particular good news, we had great support from patients and multiple patient groups on SB 359/HB 314.**

**Scope of Practice (Top Priority)**

As you may recall, SB 351 originally would have allowed advanced practice registered nurses to practice independently in some counties in Georgia. The bill did not pass the Senate. Subsequently, the bill was amended to remove the independent practice language and include the following scope of practice expansion:

1. A physician can supervise 8 APRNs (rather the 4 under current law);
2. APRN’s can order radiographic imaging (current law only allows them to order in emergency situations).

The above language was placed on numerous bills – most recently HB 927.

Ultimately, the nursing bills did not pass this year’s General Assembly.

**Opioids (Top Priority)**
MAG worked diligently to get money in the budget to address administrative issues with the prescription drug monitoring program.

SB 407 included the language to fix the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program to allow delegation within the physicians office. Hopefully, this will fix the delegation issue. This is the fourth fix to the delegation issue over the last few years.

HB 943 (Representative Karen Mathiak) would require payors to pay for other modalities prescribed by physicians as an alternative to opioids. Unfortunately, the bill did not pass but did start discussions that will continue in 2019.

**Health Insurance and Administrative Simplification**

HR 1194 (Chairman David Knight) institutes a study committee to investigate the health insurance companies (most notably Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia) new policies on emergency care and retrospective review which we contend violates the “reasonable prudent lay-person standard.” **This resolution passed and a study committee will meet prior to the 2019 General Assembly.**

HB 519 (Chairwoman Sharon Cooper) provided a solution for health insurance abuses of step therapy protocols. This bill was amended onto SB 325 and various other bills. Unfortunately, the bill narrowly failed.

HB 872 (Chairman David Knight) addressed a number of health insurance industry abuses that interrupt a patient’s continuity of care. HB 873 (Chairman David Knight) proposed solutions for a health insurance company’s prior authorization process. We did not expect these bills to pass this General Assembly. However, these bills will remain a top priority for next year’s General Assembly.

Please note this is a high level summary with the conclusion of the 2018 General Assembly. Please check your email for a full summary of all the health care bills and MAG’s position on Monday.

Have a great weekend.

Donald

Donald J. Palmisano, Jr. J.D. | Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer
Medical Association of Georgia
1849 The Exchange Suite 200 | Atlanta, Georgia 30339
678-303-9290 (Phone) | 404-312-9030 (Mobile)
dpalmisano@mag.org | www.mag.org

**Join the Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) at www.mag.org/membership**