From Social Media to Testimony:

Advocating for Our Patients

Carrie Horwitch, Stephanie Fosback, Delaney Goulet

Chris Wong, Adam Panzer, Cathrine Wheeler

ACP WA Meeting 11.8.25

Agenda

- Physician Advocacy 101
- Variety of formats to use your voice
- Upcoming Political Landscape 2026
- Breakout Sessions:
  - Resolution Writing
  - Communicating with Policy Makers
  - Op-Ed & LTE Writing

Disclosures

"The opinions each of us share today represent our own views or the explicitly stated views of WSMA as we will disclose at that time. We are not representing the institutions we are employed by in this presentation."

- Stephanie Fosback: WSMA Board of Trustees
- Carrie Horwitch: WSMA AMA Alternate Delegate, President & Board Member of WA State Public Health Association
- Cathrine Wheeler: none
- Adam Panzer: SCMS Trustee
- Chris Wong: Royalties from multiple Springer LLC clinical textbooks, PNHP Member
- Delaney Goulet: Teaches advocacy @ WSU ESFCOM IM Residency, WMSA Member

Cracks in the System…

- Homebound elderly patient unable to get COVID vaccine because PCP office no longer stocks it. Surrounding pharmacies unable to do home visit or dispense vaccine to PCP to administer at home.
- Inpatient denied acceptance at SNF due to being on methadone.
- Man wanting to donate blood told he is not a candidate due to MSM.
- 27-yo w/fentanyl withdrawal, unable to be discharged directly to inpatient substance use treatment on methadone. Hopeless, he leaves AMA.

…channel frustration into change

Why advocate?

"Act of publicly supporting or recommending, either individually or within a group, a cause or proposal, usually on behalf of others."

- To improve patient care
- To improve health equity
- To change things that bother you
- To improve your profession
- Because it's part of the physician role

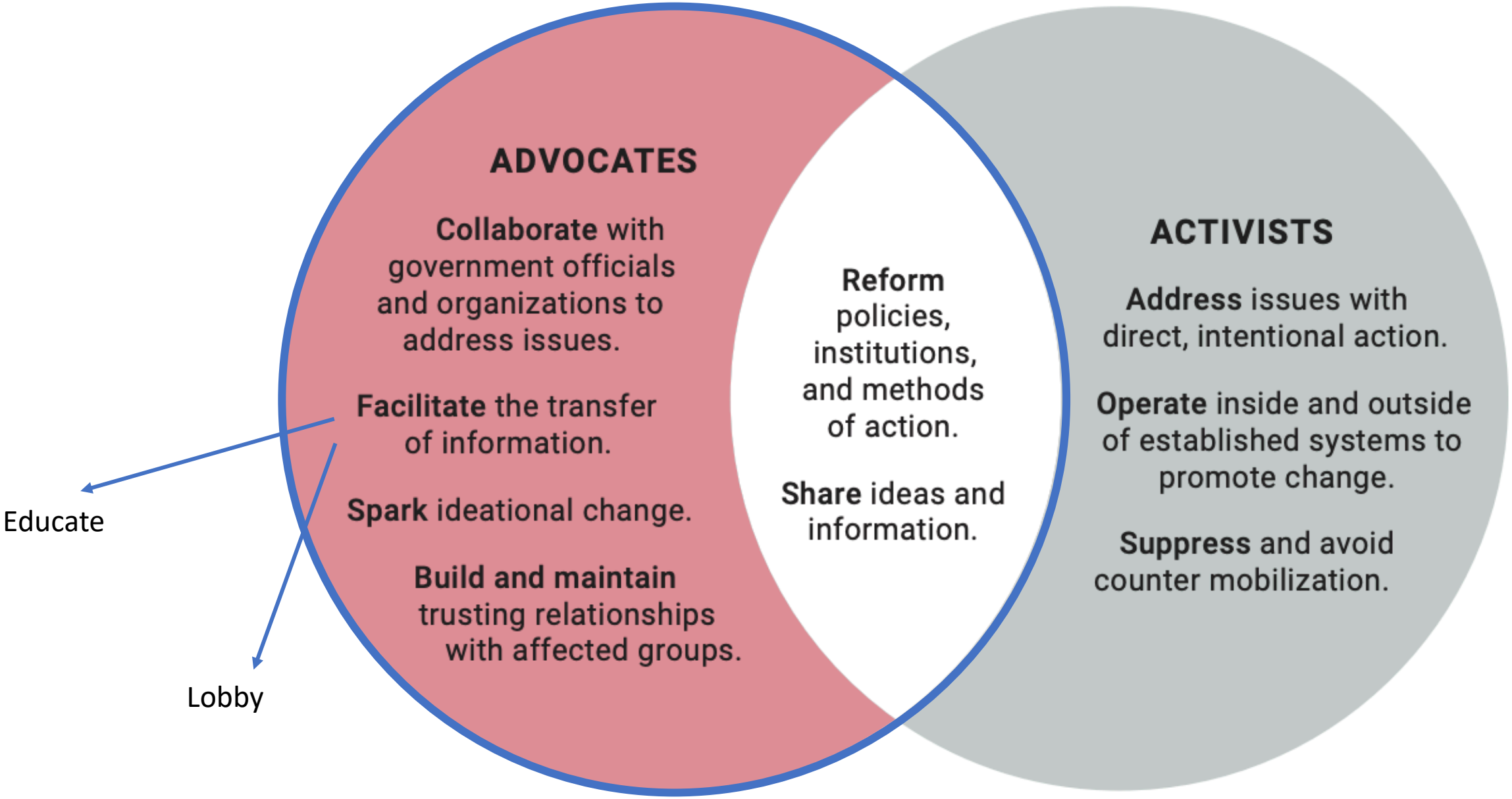
Many formats of advocacy

- PTA parent advocates for removal of soda machines in schools
- Clinic physicians invite State Representative to their practice to tell stories of constituents hoping for expansion of Medicaid Support
- Residents connect inpatients with resources to get their ballots in the hospital during election period
- Local health clinic holds vaccine fair to support vaccination for underserved
- Doctor writes op ed on hazards of prior authorization practices

Perspective: **Physician Advocacy: What Is It and How Do We Do It?**

Mark A. Earnest, MD, PhD, Shale L. Wong, MD, MSPH, and Steven G. Federico, MD

Advocates & Activists



Who do you represent?

EXAMPLE 1:

Representing Yourself	Representing Your School
If students state that they are attending a specific medical school, they should clarify that they represent only themselves and not their institution.	If students choose to wear their white coats, with their school's logo visible, during advocacy events, they should be serving in an official capacity where they represent the school.

Not all advocacy is equal, and some forms of advocacy are inappropriate as school activities. Nonpartisan civic engagement is an appropriate, approved school activity, but partisan activities are not. Refer to your institution's government relations office for best practices when engaging political candidates or representatives.

EXAMPLE 2:

Nonpartisan Engagement	Partisan Engagement
Registering voters.	Endorsing candidates and campaigns.
Hosting a candidate forum for all candidates.	Contributing to a candidate's campaign.
Sharing nonpartisan voting guides.	Rating or ranking candidates.

EXAMPLE 3:

Appropriate Advocacy Strategies
Helping a student organization host an event to discuss health care reform, health disparities, or reproductive health.
Writing op-ed/opinion pieces to raise awareness about housing insecurity as a public health issue.
Engaging in community outreach programs with nonprofit organizations.
Supporting nonpartisan voter registration.
Promoting the screening of social determinants of health in routine clinical practice.
Posting on your personal/student organization's social media to creatively highlight health inequities.

Government Relations

Government relations, federal affairs professionals manage relationships with elected officials and their staff at local, state and federal levels of government and with individuals at government agencies.

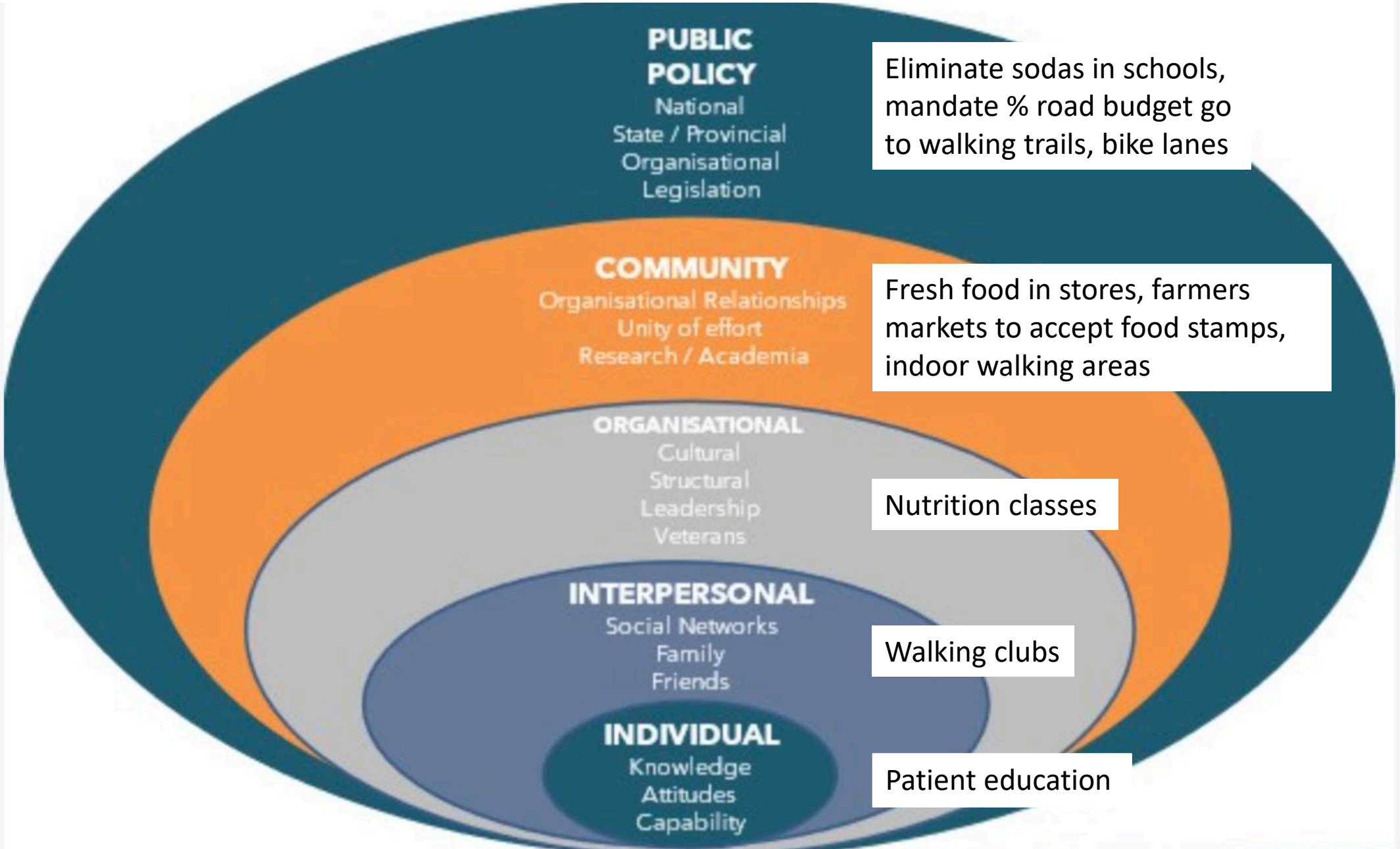
Represent interests of institution's faculty, students, staff and patients before all levels of government.

Work with them to develop and communicate political engagement and advocacy policies.

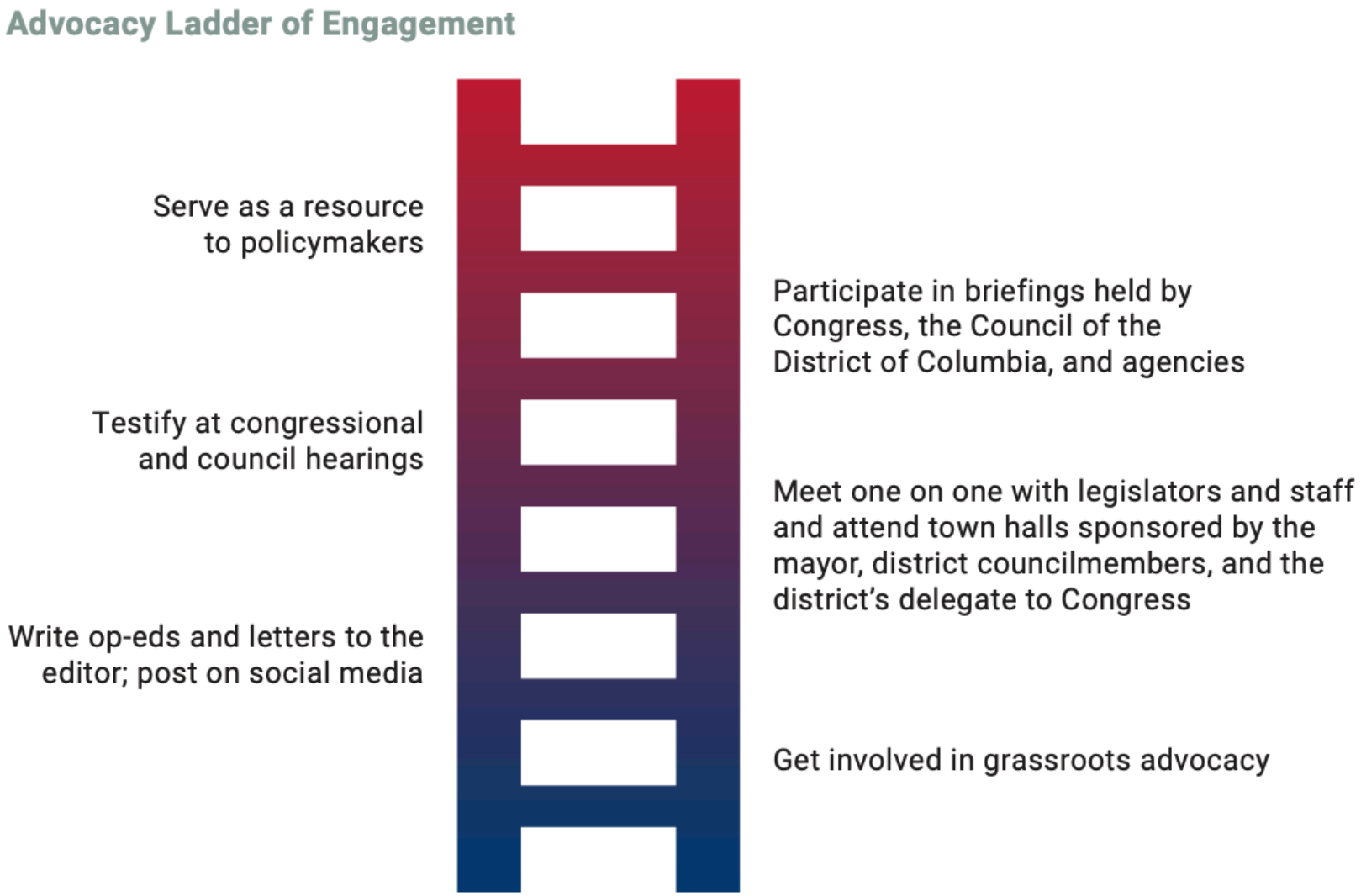
Learners represent only themselves when engaging in advocacy ***unless*** officially partnering with the Government relations office.

Where to Target Change?

Advocacy topic: Obesity



Advocacy at different levels



It is important to connect with government affairs professionals at your academic medical center for guidance and background information.

Policy Advocacy

- Advocating for structural change requires identifying *what* policy preserves an unacceptable status quo
- Develop an *ask*
- Answer *why* the status quo should be changed
- Identify *who* has power
- Identify *how* you can get those in power to enact a change on your behalf

Do Your Research

Case Study: Prior Authorization

- What issue do you want to change?
- Research the topic & related policies
- Narrow to a specific ask
- Who has formal power over the ask

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION

Advocacy in action: Fixing prior authorization

UPDATED JUN 5, 2024 • 4 MIN READ

In 2017, the *Annals of Internal Medicine* published "Putting Patients First by Reducing Administrative Tasks in Health Care: A Position Paper of the American College of Physicians," which made recommendations to address the issue of administrative tasks to mitigate or eliminate their adverse effects on physicians, their patients, and the health system as a whole. ACP's Patients Before Paperwork Initiative serves as the foundation for these policy recommendations to revise, streamline, or entirely remove burdensome administrative tasks such as prior authorization.

WSMA Washington State Medical Association

SNOHOMISH COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY

OPINION LETTERS Follow

The Games Insurers Play With Your Diagnosis

The rise of spurious insurer-driven diagnoses in Medicare Advantage is a major problem.

July 17, 2024 10:31 am ET

Learn & Narrow the Issue

- Gather information on the topic
- Form a group or work with a professional society to share concerns

Case Study: Prior Authorization

- Prior authorizations are burdens insurance companies place to get permission for either a medication or suggested treatment

"ASK"

- Improve turn-around time for prior authorization by incorporating it into the EHR

Illustrate the Why

- Prior authorizations are problematic because
  - They can delay care
  - They can cause harm to patients
  - They cost a lot of money to patients and healthcare systems
  - They have become burdensome from their initial intended purpose

Case Study: Prior Authorization

Who has power & how to reach them?

- Research who has power over policies related to Prior Authorization Process
- Resources: State Legislature Page, Physician Organization Websites, WSMA Lobbyist
- Someone who will sponsor a bill, committee chair: Schmick House Rep

Case Study: Prior Authorization

The How

- **Meeting with policymaker**
- Testimony, Written Comments
- Town Hall
- Grassroots advocacy with organizations
- Media Outlets – *Written piece* (OpEd, Letter to Editor
- *Social Media*
- *Writing Resolutions*

- Share your Why with legislator
- Discuss the bill (if there is one) that will help address some of these concerns
- Educate vs lobby
  - *Educate:* Prior authorizations are contributing to patient safety because… I hope you will consider this information when discussing this issue
  - *Lobby:* Prior authorizations are a patient safety issue because…I hope you will vote yes on bill #1357 which is one step to reduce the burden

2026 Legislative Session

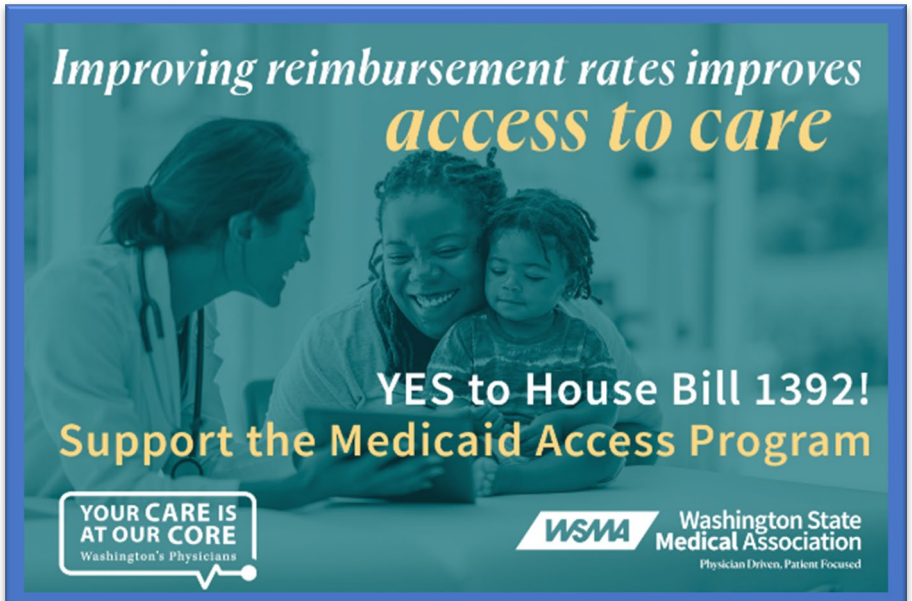
- Short session – 60 days
- Starts Monday, Jan 12, 2026
- 2025 Special Election

Federal Level Impacts

- H.R. 1 passed July 4, 2025
- **Medicaid cuts**
    - Projected to lose *billions* in federal funding
- Medicaid work requirements
- Medicaid eligibility
- ACA marketplace affordability and impacts
- Restrictions on provider taxes

WSMA 2026 Fiscal Priorities

- Medicaid rates
  - Centers for Medicaid Services rulemaking
    - Prohibits provider taxes with differential Medicaid rates
  - HR 1
    - Prohibits new provider taxes – “established/implemented as of 7/25”
  - Centers for Medicaid Services approval prospects?
    - Attorney General legal analysis
- Next steps
  - Top priority
  - Monitoring federal landscape
  - State-level pathway for rate increases



WSMA 2026 Policy Priorities

- **Vaccine access**
  - Governor's office, Department of Health, Office of Insurance Commissioner
    - Ensure continued access to vaccines, preventative services
- Continued access to coverage/care for all state residents
  - HR 1 response
  - Undocumented individuals
  - Gender affirming care, reproductive health care services

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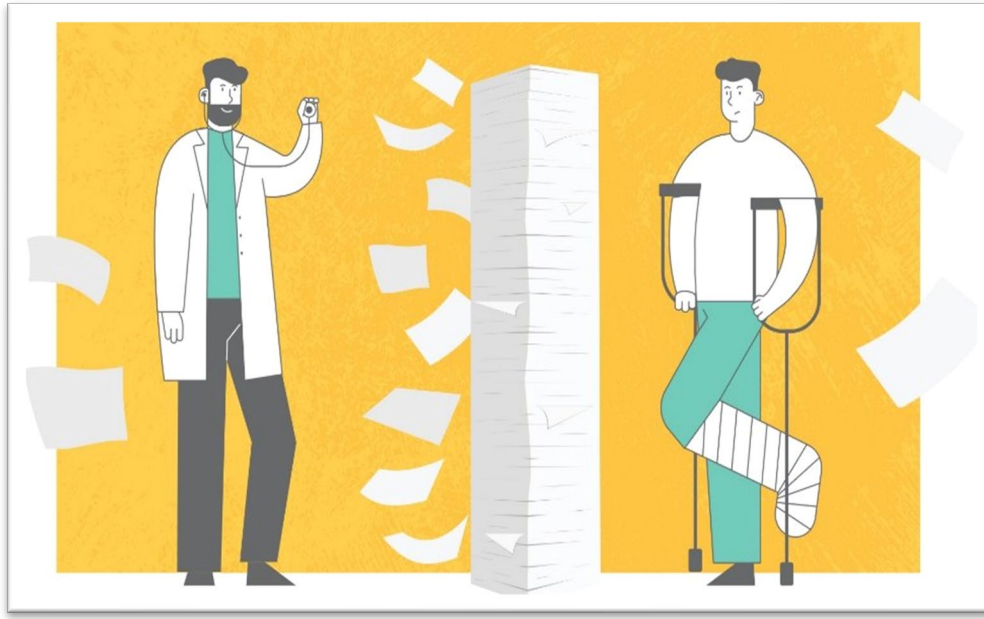
Transparency in Prior Authorization

- Prior Authorization (SB 5395)
- WSMA, WSHA, Proliance legislation
  - Impose new restrictions on insurance carriers' use of artificial intelligence to deny prior authorizations
  - Clarify state prohibition on retrospective denials of prior authorization
- Died last session due to its anticipated cost to the state
- Interim work



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Medical Title Transparency

- Building off of last session
  - HB 1780 – promoting accurate communications between patients and providers

Washington State Medical Association

WSMA 2026 Policy Priorities

- Scope of Practice
- APP reimbursement mandate (HB 1430)
- Psychologist prescribing (SB 5112)
- Pharmacists (HB 1520/SB 5513)
- Naturopaths (HB 1888)
- International Medical Graduates
    - Preceptorships (SB 5185/HB 1306)

Washington State Medical Association

2026 LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2026

WSMA

Washington State Medical Association

WSMA Medical Student and Resident Advocacy Program

A new program from the WSMA for medical students and residents who want to develop an understanding of Washington's legislative process and issues important to the physician community. This includes learning how to be an effective advocate, engaging directly with legislators, and visiting the state Capitol on a Lobby Day. Following the completion of the program, participants will be awarded a certificate by the WSMA. The program is free for medical students and residents in Washington state. Enrollees in the program receive automatic membership in the WSMA.

What is Leadership Day?

Save the Date : Leadership Day, May 12-13, 2026 in Washington, DC

What is Leadership Day?

Leadership Day is the College's annual two-day advocacy event in Washington, DC that enables our members from across the country to bring our issues of concern to U.S. lawmakers. This is a great opportunity for the College and our members to bring our policy priorities to Congress and try to influence the legislative process on behalf of internal medicine.

Small Groups & Wrap Up

- Please join a breakout room to work on Vaccine Advocacy
  - Resolution Writing
  - Communicating with Policy Makers
  - Writing Op-Eds
- Return @ 8:45am to discuss next steps and reflections

- Please join ACP WA's Health & Public Policy Committee!
- Join Advocates for Internal Medicine via ACP Advocacy

Enroll in the Advocates for Internal Medicine Network

Join more than 15,000 colleagues in the AIMn program in advocating for the interests of internal medicine in Washington DC. By joining, you will receive legislative updates on key policy issues and engage in outreach to your federal lawmakers.

Enter Email

ZIP Code

Resources

- AAMC Advocacy Toolkit for Physicians in Training
- Physician Advocacy, What is it and How do we do it? Earnest et al.
- Becoming a Physician Advocate. Earnest et al.
- WSMA
- ACP