



TMA'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE 87TH TEXAS LEGISLATURE

TMA will continue to advocate for Texas patients, Texas physicians, and the medical profession. By protecting and advancing the practice of medicine in Texas, we can ensure that Texans have access to affordable, quality health care when they need it.

“We need common-sense reforms to make sure Texas stays an attractive place to practice medicine, so our patients can see us when they need us.”

Diana L. Fite, MD, TMA President

- ✓ Provide meaningful health care coverage for uninsured and underinsured Texans
- ✓ Improve patient access through telemedicine services
- ✓ Reduce health insurance “prior authorization” red tape
- ✓ Strengthen Texas’ public health care infrastructure
- ✓ Ensure patient safety through team-based care
- ✓ Prevent taxation of medical billing services
- ✓ Preserve funding for medical residency and rural loan repayment programs
- ✓ Increase Texas’ tobacco tax and create a tax for vape products
- ✓ Retain Texas’ landmark medical liability reforms



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See next page for more detail on each TMA legislative issue and visit [texmed.org/Legislature](https://www.texmed.org/Legislature) for the latest on TMA’s legislative priorities, actions, and information on how you can help.

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Provide Meaningful Health Care Coverage

Texas already had the highest uninsured rate in the nation before the COVID-19 pandemic, and millions more are now unemployed and uninsured. The state budget also has been negatively affected by the pandemic, meaning creative approaches to expanding coverage must be explored. One such option is drawing down a 9-to-1 match – up from a 6-to-1 match – in federal funds to extend coverage to the working poor. A recent study found Texas could achieve a net savings of \$110 million (general revenue) over the next biennium by providing meaningful coverage to the uninsured. TMA will continue to work with legislative leaders on a solution to ensuring all Texans can access the health care they need when they need it.

Preserve Patient Access to Care With Telemedicine Payment Parity

The use of telemedicine has increased exponentially throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, aided in large part by state and federal protections and flexibilities that allow for payment parity and the use of audio-only telemedicine services. But those flexibilities are contingent upon declaration of a national emergency, which remains in effect only until Jan. 20. TMA has called on federal and state leaders to make those flexibilities permanent – and will continue to do so throughout the 2021 session.

Reduce Health Insurance Prior Authorization Red Tape

Prior authorizations by insurance companies were intended as a check and balance for high cost and uncommon procedures. Over the past five years, prior authorizations for health care and prescriptions have increased – leading to higher out-of-pocket costs, delays in needed care, and adverse outcomes for patients. Nearly half of Texas physicians have staff dedicated solely to prior authorizations, not patient care. TMA will work to strengthen these reforms so patients can access care when needed.

Strengthen Texas' Public Health Care Infrastructure

The pandemic continues to strain Texas' already limited public health resources and highlight existing gaps in its infrastructure. The state's outdated data systems are ill-equipped to help with real response to disease outbreaks and surveillance across the state. Funding is needed to ensure we are prepared for future outbreaks and natural disasters. The Texas economy cannot afford the cost of not having a strong public health infrastructure. TMA will continue to advocate for adequate life-saving resources.

Ensure Patient Safety Through Team-Based Care

In 2020, both California and Florida enacted independent prescribing for advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs). APRNs and other groups are expected to push for further unsupervised encroachments into the practice of medicine in Texas. As in past sessions, TMA will vigorously defend patient safety afforded by the physician-led team model of care.

Prevent Taxes on Medical Billing Services

TMA and a coalition of more than 40 organizations and companies are working on an amendment to the Texas Tax Code that would ensure third-party medical billing services are not subject to sales and use tax, a tax that would negatively impact patient access to care. Thanks to TMA advocacy, Comptroller Glenn Hegar delayed the start date to Oct. 1, 2021, giving TMA time to work with lawmakers this session to prevent the tax's implementation.

Preserve Funding for Texas' Medical Residency Programs

It's no secret physicians stay in the states where they receive their specialized medical residency training. That's why Texas needs to invest in graduate medical education (GME) as we build more medical schools to train our next generation of physicians. Otherwise, we are using Texas taxpayer funding to train physicians for other states. TMA is asking legislators to retain funding for these essential programs.

Prevent Youth Addiction to Nicotine

Increasing taxes on tobacco products has been shown to reduce consumption, preventing future nicotine addiction and saving lives. Instituting an excise tax on e-cigarettes to achieve parity with combustible cigarettes will provide much needed additional revenue to the state. TMA will continue to advocate for solutions that prevent Texas youth from becoming addicted to nicotine.

Retain Texas' Landmark Medical Liability Reforms

Passed in 2003, Texas' sweeping liability reforms have helped to curb health care lawsuit abuse and ensure Texans have access to high-quality medical care. As in past sessions, TMA will vigorously defend against efforts to dilute these important medical liability reforms.