

MARCH 2022

Advocacy Monthly



New Law Prioritizes Mental Health of Health Care Workforce

The Society joined more than 50 medical organizations in [praising lawmakers](#) for passing the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act (H.R. 1667). The legislation—signed into law earlier this month—will provide federal funding for training health care providers on suicide prevention and behavioral health, and for awareness efforts to improve mental health among millions of health care workers. The letter stated that the COVID-19 pandemic has magnified longstanding issues faced by frontline health care providers and stressed there “has never been a more critical time” to address mental health. “By passing this bipartisan and bicameral legislation, lives will be saved,” the groups wrote.

E-Cigarette Loophole Is Now Closed

On March 15, President Joe Biden signed the 2022 Omnibus Appropriations Bill—a \$1.5 trillion spending bill to fund the federal government for the remainder of fiscal year 2022. Importantly, the legislation included a provision that gives the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authority to regulate products containing synthetic nicotine. In recent years, a growing number of e-cigarette manufacturers have switched to synthetic nicotine to sidestep FDA regulation and keep their products on the shelves. The synthetic nicotine language is included on [page 1861 of the bill text](#).

CMS Hosts Listening Session on Coverage for Emerging Tech

Last month, the Centers for Medicare & Medicare Services (CMS) hosted a public meeting to help inform its development

of an alternative pathway to provide transitional coverage for medical devices designated as breakthrough technology by the FDA. The Society [participated in the virtual meeting](#), sharing that the collection of real-world evidence is essential to demonstrating value and guidelines may be needed to optimize outcomes and ensure safety. The [Medicare Coverage of Innovative Technologies and Definition of Reasonable and Necessary](#) final rule was rescinded last year due to concerns that its provisions may not have been sufficient to protect Medicare patients. This meeting was part of several steps CMS is taking “to help better achieve the goals of timely and predictable Medicare coverage of devices.” A second stakeholder session with CMS will be held this afternoon.

Society Backs Massive Funding Request for AHRQ

The Friends of AHRQ (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality), of which STS is a member, sent [letters to House and Senate leaders](#), urging appropriators to provide at least \$500 million in budget authority for fiscal year 2023—an increase of \$149.6 million over last year. The group underscored that AHRQ supports research to improve health care quality, reduce costs, advance patient safety, decrease medical errors, and broaden access to essential services—all necessary as the country recovers from COVID-19 and addresses disparities in the health care system.

Claims Data Are Discussed at E&C Meeting

The Meaningful Access to Federal Health Plan Claims Data Act of 2021 was among several bills discussed during a recent hearing of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce (E&C). This legislation, previously introduced by Reps. Larry Bucshon, MD (R-IN) and Kim Schrier, MD (D-WA), would provide clinician-led clinical data registries such as the STS National Database and STS/ACC TVT Registry with access to federal health care claims data for the purposes of research and quality improvement. With such access, “physician researchers can see trends in patient diagnoses and treatments, giving them data that can help with research and providing better care for patients,” said Rep. Schrier. For more information, visit the [STS Legislative Action Center](#).

STS Endorses Letters on Deferred Loan Payments, Assaults on Health Care Workers

The Society signed on to letters about the following issues:

- **Deferred Loan Payment**—Senators Jacky Rosen (D-NV) and John Boozman (R-AR) were thanked for recently [introducing the Resident Education Deferred Interest \(REDI\) Act](#). This bipartisan legislation would allow medical and dental students to pause student loan interest accrual and principal loan repayment during their residencies or internships. Sen. Boozman was named STS Legislator of the Year in 2021.
- **Violence against Health Care Professionals**—[Rep. Troy Carter \(D-LA\) received “deep gratitude”](#) for leading the introduction of H. Res. 909—a bipartisan resolution that condemns the growing problem of assaults on health care personnel. The timing of the resolution is key as the US health care system “faces unprecedented staffing shortages and increased workplace stressors.”

RSVP for Exclusive STS-PAC Event

Join STS surgeon leaders and the STS-PAC Board of Advisors on Wednesday, April 27, from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. ET, for the first event in the 2022 STS-PAC Speaker Series. This virtual event—open to 2022 STS-PAC contributors—will feature Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ) and Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) who are the co-chairs of the Congressional Problem Solvers Caucus. [RSVP is required](#). For more information, contact advocacy@sts.org.



STS-PAC

STS-PAC Speaker Series



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