

# 2022 Legislative Priorities

## SCOPE OF PRACTICE

TMA, as part of the Coalition for Collaborative Care (CCC), is leading efforts to preserve Tennessee physicians' ability to supervise patient care and oppose unsafe scope of practice expansion by mid-level healthcare providers. TMA joined this coalition of medical specialty societies and other healthcare organizations to promote physician-led team-based healthcare delivery teams as the best model for patient safety and quality of care. Because of our leadership, advanced practice nurses and physician assistants have not succeeded in changing state laws to achieve independent practice in Tennessee, and TMA remains steadfast in advocating for policies that improve and strengthen interprofessional relationships, not weaken them.

## TELEHEALTH

TMA led a 2020 effort during a special session of the Tennessee General Assembly to ensure telehealth services are reimbursed at the same rates as in-office visits. The bill passed, but has a sunset date of April 1, 2022. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the extraordinary utility of telehealth in increasing access to care. Patients expect providers to offer these services in the future, but without payment parity it will not be economically feasible. Medical providers cannot be expected to cover the cost of providing telehealth at a reduced rate of pay. This year, TMA, alongside our partners, will advocate for the removal of the sunset. We will also seek allowances for audio-only telehealth in circumstances where patients are unable to access audio-video technology.

## COVID-19 SPECIAL SESSION CLEANUP

TMA will be working on a cleanup bill with the Tennessee General Assembly to make it clear

that physician practices enrolled in Medicare and/or TennCare are exempt from the law that was recently passed prohibiting businesses from mandating verification of a COVID-19 vaccine or face covering. Vaccine mandates imposed at the federal level have the potential to place medical providers in a conflicting position between state and federal laws. Although TMA worked to have health providers exempted from the final version of legislation, the language provided to the sponsors was changed during an early-morning hours debate and drafted incorrectly. The intent, however, is clear: medical practices are exempt. TMA will work to amend the statute to more accurately reflect the exemption.

## BALANCE BILLING

TMA leads a coalition of physician specialty organizations in protecting physicians' ability to negotiate a fair reimbursement when providing out of network care. Our bill would only require patients to pay according to their in-network responsibility if they receive a surprise medical bill, and would allow out-of-network physicians to pursue fair payment from health insurance companies through an independent arbitration process if the initial payment was unsatisfactory. The bill is based on a successful model used in Georgia. It would incentivize health insurance companies to offer fair, in-network initial payments to out-of-network hospital-based physicians.

