

*PA Rheumatology Society
Grassroots Advocacy Update
July 2024*

Federal Grassroots Activity

ACR

ACR continues to collaborate with our federal medical specialty colleagues to ensure the practice of medicine continues to be respected and protected from added abuses/barriers. Highlights of their work this month included:

- **ACR Focus on Private Practice-** In our last PRS grassroots update, I highlighted ACR's grassroots advocacy efforts to protect the collapse of private practice and challenges to independent practice. ACR's dedicated focus on private practice continued in July by publishing a recent article in *The Rheumatologist*. The link to the article is enclosed here for your review: <https://www.the-rheumatologist.org/article/the-ins-outs-of-private-rheumatology-practice/> .
- **Response to Proposed 2025 Physician Payment Rule-** ACR continues to fight for adequate payments for rheumatologists that accept Medicare patients in their practice. Within their comments, they were quick to note that rheumatologists have been dealing with workforce shortages/increased administrative burdens (such as added paperwork, more coding changes, and other barriers to patient care). Although there have been incremental changes to the Medicare Payment Fee Schedule/Quality Payment Program over the years, with the above additional burdens, physician reimbursement rates have declined about 29% (from 2001-2024). For more information, check their July 10th press release and accompanying documentation (<https://rheumatology.org/press-releases/american-college-of-rheumatology-reacts-to-proposed-2025-physician-payment-rule>).
- **ACR Quarterly Advocacy Update-** The second year of the 118th session of Congress began at the beginning of this year. ACR compiled their quarterly update (activities from January 1, 2024-July 25, 2024). The link is enclosed here for your review (<https://assets.contentstack.io/v3/assets/bltee37abb6b278ab2c/blt3a721c088acbc4b2/quarterly-advocacy-update.pdf>).
- **Upcoming ACR meetings of potentially interest to PRS members-**
 - *Convergence 2024- November 14-19, 2024, Washington DC:* <https://rheumatology.org/meetings/acr-convergence> .
 - Check out the website for more online opportunities.

CSRO

Since ACR/CSRO labor for rheumatologists at the federal level, many of their federal/state grassroots initiatives are identical. For sake of brevity, I will highlight a few of their recent activities:

- **Wall Street Journal/PBM Initiative:** In conjunction with Congressional activities in late July on PBM reform, CSRO joined their colleagues at the Community Oncology Alliance, the Food Industry Association, the National Association of Chain Drug Stores, and the National Community Pharmacy Association in creating a national advertisement campaign. The timing of their ad in the *Wall Street Journal* coincided with stakeholder testimonies before the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability on July 23rd. Here is a link to the ad: <https://csro.info/UserFiles/file/WSJAdFinal.pdf>
- **CSRO Advocacy in Action-** In the two July CSRO *biweekly updates*, articles highlighted their virtual advocacy day, grassroots advocacy action on PBMs and Medicare's Proposed 2025 Payment Fee Schedule. Here are links to the documents: <https://myemail-api.constantcontact.com/CSRO-Update--Legislation-and-advocacy-efforts.html?soid=1132305000435&aid=Q5H9pob2vH8> and <https://myemail-api.constantcontact.com/CSRO-Update--Legislation-and-advocacy-efforts.html?soid=1132305000435&aid=-ZYFFMiI9f4>
- **State Legislative Report-** On July 26th, CSRO published an updated state legislative update report. Here is a link to the report: <https://files.constantcontact.com/3f723a2a701/bf3ed506-1450-4e57-9fec-9597796d0908.pdf>
- Upcoming training opportunities of interest to our membership:
 - *September 20-22, 2024: Advocacy Conference, Nashville, Tennessee (details/registration/information below:* <https://csro.info/conferences/upcoming-events/advocacy-conference>)
 - *February 21-23, 2025: Fellows Conference, Nashville, Tennessee (details/registration/information below:* <https://csro.info/fellows/fellows-conference>)

PRS Advocacy Committee Update

Priorities/Next Steps- Dr. Denio and I continue to focus on member constituent matching, educating members on grassroots advocacy/potentially holding a Capitol advocacy day, and initial discussions with CSRO on creating an Op-Ed piece on cost containment issues (such as prior authorization, Pharmacy Benefit Managers [PBMs] and the co-payment accumulator).

State Legislative Activity

Enactment of 2024-2025 State Budget: After many negotiations/deliberations on top funding initiatives (including school vouchers, mental health projects and state infrastructure line items), the state House and Senate sent Senate Bill 1001 to the governor after the June 30th constitutional deadline. The final enacted budget is a \$47.6 billion spending package (up a little over 6% more than the 2023-24 enacted state budget). Governor Shapiro signed Senate Bill 1001 into law on July 11, 2024.

NOTE: *although the state budget was enacted on July 11th, there are more fiscal code bills and unfinished business that may be addressed in the fall session.*

Activities at the State Capitol- The primary focus of both chambers this month was the enactment of the 2024-2025 state budget. That being said, a few proposed bills of interest to rheumatology received consideration or were introduced.

Highlights included:

- House Bill 1754 (insurance coverage for biomarker testing)- signed by Governor Shapiro on July 1, 2024 (Act 39 of 2024).
- **House Bill 1993 (PBM regulation)- Print Number 3499- Act 77 of 2024 [detailed bill analysis and enacted bill attached]**
- Senate Bill 739 (telemedicine)- signed by Governor Shapiro on July 3, 2024 (Now Act 42 of 2024).

NOTE: *all bills are on our watch list/explored closely as they move through the state legislature. A copy of our most updated legislative tracking list is enclosed for your convenience.*

SESSION DATES:

PA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

September 23, 24, 25, 30

October 1, 2, 21, 22, 23

November 12, 13

SENATE OF PENNSYLVANIA:

September 16, 17, 18, 30

October 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 21, 22, 23

November 13, 14

Submitted by Deborah Ann Shoemaker, PRS lobbyist