**Grassroots Advocacy Update**

**March 27, 2023**

**Federal Grassroots Activity**

**ACR**

* Deborah Ann Shoemaker, PRS lobbyist, along with many of our members, collaborate with ACR on a regular basis to maximize our Society’s efforts at the federal level.
* There are numerous federal and state grassroots advocacy initiatives that ACR is engaged in on behalf of all rheumatologists.

This month alone, ACR has made formal comments in the following areas:

1. Workforce Shortages (Congressional Committee Request for Information [RFI]);
2. Prior Authorization (CMS’ Proposed Rules on Prior Authorization); and
3. Funding for Centers for Disease Control [CDC] (Formal Request to Senate for general CDC funding and CDC’s Juvenile Arthritis Program).

*Let me know if you want a copy of any of these letters*.

* As detailed within our last update, ACR created an advocacy priority list for 2023. To access this list, click on this link: <https://www.rheumatology.org/Advocacy/Federal-Advocacy/Key-Issues>.

**CSRO**

* Similar to ACR’s advocacy efforts, CSRO has been actively engaged with our members, our lobbyist and as a partner within the Alliance of Specialty Medicine at the state and federal level.
* Akin to the work at ACR, CSRO has been engaged in a variety of issues – including formal comments on both workforce shortages and in collaboration with the Alliance of Service Providers on omnibus letter to CMS (related to prior authorization; funding for certain programs, etc.).
* CSRO continues to track state legislative activity of interest to rheumatology. A copy of a comprehensive state-by-state legislative update (as of 3.17.23) is **enclosed** for your reference.
* Similar to ACR, CSRO recently updated their legislative priorities for 2023. Here is a link to the list: <https://csro.info/advocacy.html>

**State Grassroots Activity**

*Activities of State House*

*House Leadership Changes:* In late February, Representative Joanna McClinton (D-Philadelphia) was elected Speaker of the House. With another vacancy in the House, Democrats currently hold the majority by one legislative seat. Officer elections and committee assignments have now been made. Committee action has begun in earnest, especially for those members on the House Appropriations Committee (responsible to administer budget hearings prior to House consideration of Governor Shapiro’s 2023-2024 proposed budget). A link to current House officers is enclosed here for your reference: [*https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/member\_information/house/officers.cfm*](https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/member_information/house/officers.cfm).

*General Updates:* Since the House has not been in session much, proposed bill introductions are now coming fast and furious. Only one bill is of potential interest to PRS- House Bill 78. This bill, introduced by newly-elected Representative Arvid Venkat, MD (an emergency physician, former president of their statewide medical specialty organization), seeks to reduce and/or eliminate medical debt. PAMED, members of the PA Provider Coalition and other medical related stakeholders possess an interest in House Bill 78. **A copy of this proposed legislation is enclosed for your review and comment.**

*Activities of the Senate of Pennsylvania*

The Senate of Pennsylvania has been in session for a few months, with limited movement.

**Of interest to PRS, Senate Bill 372 (Co-Payment Accumulator) has been reintroduced by Senator Judy Ward.** On March 23rd, the PA Make All Co-Pay Counts Coalition finally met to discuss the proposed legislation and future step(s). *Both our lobbyist and CSRO’s lobbyist we in attendance.* It was a very short meeting, briefly discussing the bill, providing an overview of the bill (since there were many new members to the Coalition), noting movement in other states and next step(s). At this time, Senator Ward’s staff has been contacted, but the bill is expected to move slow (if at all) until later this year. **A copy of the bill is enclosed here for your use**. Updates will be given as available.

**Our most updated legislative tracking list is enclosed for your review**.

*Activities of the Executive Branch*

*State Budget Update*:

Governor Shapiro unveiled his first proposed budget on March 7, 2023. As this was his first budget as a new governor, the PA Constitution allows for a month later budget address.

His first proposed budget was pretty conservative- by in large very acceptable by both sides of the aisle (that is, according to Senate Majority Leader Kim Ward “if we can afford it.”).

Highlights of potential interest to rheumatology include the following:

* Raise the state’s minimum wage from $7.25 an hour to $15 an hour.
* New investments in the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program – to raise the monthly benefit by 50 percent.
* Continue lowering the corporate net income tax.
* Fix the unemployment compensation system. A year ago, the backlogs were 100,000. They now stand at 33,000.
* Create new tax credits to encourages Pennsylvanians to join the ranks of police officers, teachers and **nurses**.

Budget hearings run from mid-March until mid-April. According to the PA Constitution, the state legislature must pass and send their passed state budget to Governor Shapiro for approval/enactment by June 30th.

**Pennsylvania General Assembly Session Update**

**2023-2024 Legislative Session**

**2023 SENATE SESSION SCHEDULE**

May 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10

June 5, 6, 7, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30

**2023 HOUSE SESSION SCHEDULE**

April 24, 25, 26

May 1, 2, 3, 22, 23, 24

June 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27. 28, 29, 30