

Working for You

January 2025

Highlights from AHA's recent advocacy efforts on behalf of America's hospitals and health systems

Protecting Key Programs

A CONGRESSIONAL PACKAGE PASSED IN DECEMBER 2024 INCLUDED PROVISIONS THAT ADDRESSED KEY ISSUES FOR AHA MEMBERS:

- Delaying Medicaid disproportionate share hospital cuts to April 1, 2025.
- Extending the Medicare-dependent hospital and enhanced low-volume hospital programs through April 1, 2025.
- Extending key telehealth waivers and the hospital-at-home program through March 31, 2025.
- Extending a 1.0 floor on the work Geographic Practice Cost Index (GPCI) through April 1, 2025.
- Extending add-on payment for ambulance services that support rural, "super-rural," and urban ambulance services through March 31, 2025.
- The package also did not include any site-neutral payment cuts or burdensome transparency provisions.

Tackling Supply Chain Challenges

WHEN HURRICANE HELENE FORCED THE CLOSURE OF A MAJOR MEDICAL SUPPLY PLANT, THE AHA STEPPED IN WITH INFORMATION, ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT.

- AHA executives met with policy makers to inform and educate them on the impact of the shortages.
- The AHA media relations team fielded numerous inquiries and coordinated interviews to educate the public.
- Regular briefings kept members informed and provided guidance on conservation strategies.

Supporting the Field on Cybersecurity

THE AHA RESPONSE TO THE CHANGE HEALTHCARE CYBERATTACK, THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CYBER BREACH IN HEALTH CARE HISTORY, MADE A REAL DIFFERENCE FOR OUR MEMBERS.

- Early action by the AHA informed members, the FBI, HHS and CISA to the severity of the issue.
- Continued pressure and information sharing with CMS helped secure an accelerated payment program for the field.
- Congressional testimony by the AHA highlighted the severity of the incident and the need for additional support.
- Grassroots lobbying brought the member voice to the forefront at a subsequent hearing with UnitedHealth Group CEO. Members of Congress are holding UnitedHealth Group accountable and long overdue questions about its outsized power and influence are being raised.
- Our public pressure and behind-the-scenes work ensured that UnitedHealth Group -- not hospitals and health systems -- would make all breach notifications to affected patients.
- In June, AHA worked with Microsoft, Google and the White House to provide free and discounted cybersecurity resources to assist rural hospitals; discussions continue about expanding enhanced cybersecurity support for all hospitals.

In the Courts

SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES ON SEVERAL FRONTS:

- In March 2024, a federal appeals court upheld an Arkansas law, ruling that drugmakers cannot restrict 340B program offerings from community and specialty pharmacies. A similar favorable ruling occurred in a Louisiana district court in September 2024.
- In June 2024, a United States District Court Judge in Texas ruled in favor of the AHA, Texas Hospital Association, and hospital plaintiffs, agreeing that Department of Health and Human Services “bulletins” that restrict health care providers from using standard third-party web technologies that capture IP addresses on portions of their public-facing webpages were unlawful final rules.
- AHA’s amicus brief played an important role in convincing the Supreme Court to take a case for the next term that could bring in more than \$1 billion annually for DSH hospitals.
- In August 2024, a federal court struck down a sweeping health care noncompete ban, agreeing with the AHA that the ban was “unreasonably overbroad” and that the FTC lacks authority to implement the regulations.

Holding Commercial Insurers Accountable

ADDRESSING PRIOR AUTHORIZATION ISSUES:

- In January 2024, CMS finalized a rule that requires commercial insurers to act faster on prior authorization requests, give a reason for denials, and update electronic systems to facilitate prior authorization. We continue to urge Congress to pass legislation that would codify and expand on parts of the rule.

Achieving Regulatory Relief

AN IMPORTANT EXTENSION:

- Thanks to AHA feedback in 2024, the EPA extended the compliance window from 18 months to two to three years on a rule that will reduce ethylene oxide emissions from commercial sterilization facilities.

STOPPING A FLAWED PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY PROPOSAL:

- Johnson & Johnson scrapped a pharmaceutical rebate initiative for hospitals participating in the 340B Drug Discount Program after pushback from the Health Resources and Services Administration. The AHA was instrumental in providing HRSA the information that drove this decision.