**2022 Virtual State Advocacy Forum – Common Obstacles and Identifying Partners to Overcome Them**

*By: (Name of attendee(s) to the 2022 State Advocacy Forum)*

The 2022 APMA State Advocacy Forum (SAF)was held virtually on August 20, 2022. Coordinated by APMA’s Center for Professional Advocacy (CPA), the Forum has traditionally been held in person every other year, but following last year’s Forum in Atlanta, attendees expressed significant support for meeting sooner than 2023, and the virtual conference was created. The Forum provides an unmatched opportunity for state association leaders and representatives to discuss new and ongoing state legislative issues. While the Forum was held virtually this year, the CPA still wanted to partner with and highlight with a host state, and the Iowa Podiatric Medical Society (IPMS) was selected as co-host. The CPA selected IPMS in part because of the tireless work they have done on behalf of their members including their most recent work to update Iowa’s podiatric physician scope of practice to one day allow podiatric physicians to give vaccinations.

The meeting started on Saturday morning with a spotlight on IPMS, featuring their most recent legislative partner, Iowa State Representative Steven Bradley. Representative Bradley stressed the importance of building and maintaining relationships with your legislators – it’s important not to come to them for the first time with an immediate ask. Additionally, he stressed the importance of not giving up if you initially encounter a roadblock, or your bill doesn’t make it out of committee the first session it is introduced. These battles can sometimes take years, and it's important to keep pushing onward.

Representative Bradley’s comments were then followed by an informative panel on podiatry state medical boards. The panel featured Gene Nassif, DPM and Barbara Campbell, DPM who are on the Iowa and Arizona state podiatry boards, as well as Russell J. Stoner, who is the executive director of the Federation of Podiatry Medical Boards (FPMB). State medical boards, whether podiatry specific or a multispecialty single board, play an important role in a podiatric physician’s everyday practice by doing the following:

* Setting licensure requirements
* Determining if disciplinary action is necessary
* Working with state, legislature, and state association entities to determine regulatory and legislative updates

The day also featured a two-part series on important tools in a state’s advocacy toolbox – DPMs holding state and local government positions and state political action committee (PAC) funds to help support your legislative initiatives. Forum attendees first heard from Kevin Malecek, Director, Economic Development and International Trade in Mentor, Ohio and former state elected official presented on the process of running for office. He addressed important topics like decision-making, fundraising, and identifying potential candidates. Kristin Brackemyre, Director of Public Affairs Council’s PAC and Government Relations addressed PACs – specifically:

* the importance of PACs;
* compliance essentials;
* frequently asked questions about PACs; and
* best practices and fundraising.

In addition to hearing from these speakers, the Forum held two breakout sessions which were both followed by an open discussion section, followed by a joint session with all attendees summarizing their key issues. The morning session focused on new and ongoing state issues, while the afternoon session focused on advocacy tools and strategies to resolve those issues. A common problem that many states are facing relates to scope of practice – whether it's cleaning up previous restrictions, updating the scope to include treatment of the ankle, or making sure that podiatric physicians are not omitted from new legislation, whether by design or accidental oversight. Another common issue that state associations are facing is disparity in reimbursement compared to other specialties.

In the advocacy breakout and open discussion, a common theme that emerged for resolving these issues is partnership and open communication. State associations and their lobbyists are finding more success by seeking common ground with other allopathic and osteopathic colleagues, working with local and state legislators, and reaching out to other state associations for advice on similar issues. State components are also encouraged to contact the CPA for assistance and guidance.

Finally, Forum attendees also heard reports from two featured states – Alabama and Mississippi – that had received both a CPA Innovation Grant as well as a CPA Financial Assistance Grant in 2022. Both states are working toward including treatment of the ankle in their state scope of practice. Funds were used to meet with and educate legislators, as well as fund the costs of advisors. The CPA Innovation Grant program provides up to 10 states every year a $1,000 grant to modernize their state scope-of-practice laws, advance physician definition, or build relationships, while the CPA Financial Assistance Grant can be used for a broader application. More information about the grants is available at [www.apma.org/innovation](http://www.apma.org/innovation) and [www.apma.org/CPA](http://www.apma.org/CPA).

Overall, the 2022 Virtual State Advocacy Forum was a productive and educational meeting. Hearing directly from my colleagues, I am reminded that any successful advocacy efforts require dedication and partnership with others to get a goal over the finish line. Success does not happen overnight, but with the hard work and diligence of our members and our leadership and engagement with our members, we can make meaningful progress. I look forward to working with you and our state component leaders to implement many of the innovative ideas and tactics I gleaned at this year’s forum.