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**Florida Academy of Family Physicians  
2022 Legislative Session  
Interim Capital Update – Week #1  
September 19, 2021**

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The legislative process is a marathon, not a sprint which is represented by the interim committee weeks (five in all, see below) that start months before the actual session. Although the session is not scheduled to begin until January 11<sup>th</sup>, the Legislature recently commenced a series of interim committee meetings which allows legislators to develop policy agendas, discuss recently-enacted legislation, and start to build a spending plan.

- Monday, October 11 – Friday, October 15, 2021
- Monday, October 18 – Friday, October 22, 2021
- Monday, November 1 – Friday, November 5, 2021
- Monday, November 15 – Friday, November 19, 2021
- Monday, November 29 – Friday, December 3, 2021

Following is an update on issues impacting the Florida Academy of Family Physicians.

**New Surgeon General Tapped by Governor**

On September 21, Governor Ron DeSantis announced the appointment of a new Surgeon General who in Florida also serves as the Secretary of the Department of Health. Dr. Joseph Lapado, MD, PhD. replaces Dr. Scott Rivkees who had only committed to serve in the Surgeon General role for two years. Dr. Lapado's impact in Florida is yet to be known, more to come as DeSantis' future as governor and even potential run for President of the United States is determined.

**Legislation Important to Florida's Family Physicians**

It is important to remember that there are more bills to be filed and considered by the legislature, including glitch bills to address previously passed legislation, so be on the lookout for updates when released by the FAFP in the weeks to come.

**Telehealth Practice Standards –**

**[HB 17](#)** by Rep. Tom Fabricio (R-Miramar) and **[SB 312](#)** by Senator Manny Diaz (R-Hialeah) allow Schedule III, IV, and V controlled substances to be prescribed via telehealth. In addition, SB 312 allows for audio-only telehealth. The FAFP is strongly supporting this legislation and is working to include parity payment for telemedicine for live, in-person visits.

**Abortion Rights –**

**[HB 167](#)** by Rep. Webster Barnaby (R-Deltona) requires physicians to conduct a test for, and inform women seeking abortions of, the presence of a detectable fetal heartbeat. The bill also prohibits physicians from performing or inducing an abortion if a fetal heartbeat is detected and authorizes a private civil cause of action for violations of the statutory

requirement. The FAFP is closely monitoring this legislation and working with the bill sponsor to explain the inherent challenges related to how this will impact patient care.

**Medicaid Eligibility –**

[HB 27](#) by Rep. Geraldine Thompson (D-Windermere) expands Medicaid eligibility and coverage to adults who are under 65 who have an income equal to or below 133 percent of the federal poverty level.

**Physician Certifications for Medical Marijuana –**

[SB 164](#) by Senator Jeff Brandes (R-St. Petersburg) authorizes qualified physicians to perform patient examinations and evaluations through telehealth for renewals of physician certifications for the medical use of marijuana.

**COVID Restriction Limitations –**

[HB 75](#) by Rep. Anthony Sabatini (R-Howey-In-The-Hills) prohibits state or any political subdivision from requiring COVID-19 vaccinations and from enacting a mask mandate to minimize the spread of COVID-19 or any other infectious disease. The legislation prohibits vaccine passports and provides that businesses in this state may not require customers to provide documentation of COVID-19 vaccination or COVID-19 post-transmission recovery.

**Electrocardiograms for Student Athletes –**

[HB 59](#) by Rep. Fred Hawkins (R-St. Cloud) requires certain high school students to receive an electrocardiogram in order to participate in interscholastic athletic competitions.

**Vaccination Mandates –**

[HB 6009](#) by Rep. Anthony Sabatini (R-Howey-In-The-Hills) removes the authority of the Surgeon General to order vaccinations of individuals upon the declaration of a public health emergency.

**Recovery of Damages in Medical Negligence Claims –**

[HB 6011](#) by Rep. Spencer Roach (R-North Fort Myers) and [SB 262](#) by Senator Ana Maria Rodriquez (R-Doral) authorize parents of adult children to recover damages for mental pain and suffering in medical negligence suits. FAFP strenuously opposes this bill, promoted by the trial bar, as it will negatively impact medical malpractice rates.

**Medicaid Modernization –**

[SB 330](#) by Senator Jason Brodeur (R-Sanford) authorizes Medicaid to reimburse providers for remote evaluation and patient monitoring services.

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