



**Florida Academy of Family Physicians  
2021 Legislative Session  
Capital Update – WEEK FIVE  
April 2, 2021**

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Whew! The legislature just completed week five of nine, passing the half-way point of the legislative session. The process as a whole is like a funnel, the number of bills and policy issues introduced at the beginning of the legislative session narrows considerably as the session gets closer to concluding. If a filed bill has not yet been heard by a committee at this point, it likely will not pass. And the pressure will increase over the next few weeks as both budget and policy compete for attention. The half-way point does not mean that half of the legislature's work is completed. As the great football coach Bear Bryant said, "Don't give up at half time. Concentrate on winning the second half."

**Doctor of the Day**

This week and next are quite as no FAFP members are serving as doctor of the day but will be back the week of April 12!

**House & Senate Budget Proposals Crystalize**

Florida House and Senate committees moved forward this week with budget proposals that stand \$2 billion apart and initially take different approaches to budgeting what is expected to be nearly \$10 billion in new federal stimulus money. Lawmakers may also see an increase in available cash next week when state economists revise general revenue estimates. This week's committee votes on the budget proposals were initial steps as leaders prepare to negotiate a final FY 2021-2022 budget. The budgets will be on the floor in both chambers on Wednesday April 7 and voted out and ready for conference by Friday April 9.

Following is an update on the Florida Academy of Family Physicians' priorities.

**Legislation Important to Florida's Family Physicians – FAFP Positions Noted**

**COVID-19 Liability Protections for Businesses & Health Care Providers – Support – SIGNED INTO LAW**

Legislative leaders announced that an agreement had been reached on COVID-19 liability protections for businesses and health-care providers. The agreement was placed on SB 72 by Senator Jeff Brandes (R-St. Petersburg). The agreement provides procedures for COVID-19-related civil actions. **SB 72** took effect on March 29 when the Governor signed the bill and applies retroactively; however, the bill does not apply in a civil action against a particular defendant if the suit is filed before the bill's effective date.

**SB 72 passed the Senate on March 18 by a vote of 24-15 and passed the House on March 26 by a vote of 83-31. The bill was immediately enrolled and sent to the Governor who signed**

the bill into law on March 29. FAFP worked with other health care organizations in support of the legislation.

Link to Enrolled Version of SB 72:

<https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/72/BillText/er>

### **APRN Scope of Practice Expansion – Oppose**

**HB 111** by Rep. Randy Maggard (R-Dade City), **SB 424** by Senator Jeff Brandes (R-St. Petersburg) allow advanced practice registered nurses (APRN) to engage in full independent practice by removing the current restriction to primary care practice.

FAFP is actively opposing these bills and neither bill has been heard by any House or Senate committees.

Link to HB 111: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/111>

Link to SB 424: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/424>

### **PA Independent Practice – Oppose**

**HB 431** by Rep. Bob Rommel (R-Naples), **SB 894** by Senator Manny Diaz (R-Hialeah), and **HB 1299** by Rep. Alex Rizo (R-Miami) allow licensed physician assistants (PAs) to practice autonomously. FAFP worked to remove the autonomous practice provisions in the bill and continues to work to ensure the appropriate supervision is in place to protect patients. The amended bills also allow PAs to prescribe psychiatric medications under supervision to those under 18 years of age.

HB 431 is in the Health & Human Services Committee.

SB 894 is in Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services.

HB 1299 has not been heard in any House committees.

Link to HB 431: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/431>

Link to SB 894: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/894>

Link to HB 1299: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/1299>

### **Psychologist Prescribing – Oppose**

**SB 160** by Senator Jeff Brandes (R-St. Petersburg) and **HB 687** by Representative Ramon Alexander (D-Tallahassee) allow certified, licensed psychologists to prescribe, administer, discontinue, and distribute prescription drugs, including controlled substances.

Neither bill has had a committee hearing.

Link to SB 160: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/160>

Link to HB 687: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/687>

### **Optometry – Oppose**

**SB 876** by Senator Manny Diaz (R-Hialeah) and **HB 631** expand the scope of practice for certified optometrists to perform laser and non-laser ophthalmic procedures and therapies under certain circumstances.

HB 631 is in the Health and Human Services Committee, the final committee hearing.

SB 876 has two hearings remaining – Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services and Appropriations.

Link to SB 876: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/876>

Link to HB 631: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/631>

### **Administration of Vaccines – Oppose**

**SB 494** by Senator Danny Burgess (R-Zephyrhills) and **HB 459** by Rep. Fiona McFarland (R-Sarasota) allow pharmacists or registered interns under the supervision of a pharmacist to administer to adults all immunizations or vaccines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.

**SB 494 is in the Rules Committee, its last committee reference. HB 459 has not been heard by any House committees.**

**SB 768** by Senator Dennis Baxley (R-Ocala) and **HB 1063** by Rep. Juan Fernandez-Barquin (R-Miami) authorize pharmacists and registered interns to administer immunizations and vaccines to children 6 years of age or older. The legislation was amended to:

- Authorize qualified pharmacists to administer the influenza vaccine only to individuals age 7 and older;
- Revise the list of immunizations that pharmacists and registered pharmacy interns are permitted to administer to adults;
- Authorize pharmacists to administer those vaccines or immunizations lists in the 2021, as opposed to the 2015, CDC Recommended Immunization Schedule for adults and the CDC's Health Information for International Travel; and
- Permit a pharmacist, or a registered intern under the supervision of a pharmacist, to administer any vaccine that has been licensed or authorized for emergency use by the FDA and allows the BOP to authorize by rule additional vaccines that may be administered as recommended by the CDC.

Additionally, HB 1063 allows a pharmacist to supervise up to 3 registered interns.

**HB 1063 is on the calendar of bills ready to be considered by the full House.**

**On March 30, SB 768 passed the Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee by a vote of 8-0.**

Link to SB 494: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/494>

Link to HB 459: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/459>

Link to SB 768: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/768>

Link to HB 1063: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/1063>

### **Step-therapy Protocol Exemptions – Support**

**SB 1290** by Senator Ed Hooper (R-Clearwater) and **HB 1001** by Rep. Matt Willhite (D-Wellington) require health insurers to publish on their website, and provide in writing to the insurer, procedures to request step therapy protocol exemptions.

This week, HB 1001 was amended in committee to define “step therapy protocol” as a protocol or program that establishes the specific sequence in which prescription drugs, medical procedures, or courses of treatment must be used to treat a health condition. The bill also requires a process to receive a “protocol exemption”, which is a determination by an insurer or HMO to exempt an insured patient from an existing step therapy protocol. Further, the revised bill requires an insurer or HMO to publish on its website, and provide to an insured in writing, a procedure for an insured patient and health care provider to request a protocol exemption. The procedure must include:

- The manner in which an insured patient or health care provider may request a protocol exemption;
- The manner and timeframe in which the health insurer or HMO is required to authorize or deny a protocol exemption request; and,

- The manner and timeframe in which an insured patient may appeal the denial of a request.

Under the bill, an insurer or HMO granting a protocol exemption must specify the prescription drug, medical procedure, or course of treatment approved. Alternatively, an insurer or HMO denying a protocol exemption request must provide a written explanation of the denial, including the clinical rationale supporting the denial. The written explanation must also describe the procedure for appealing the determination by the insurer or HMO.

**On March 30, HB 1001 passed the Finance and Facilities Subcommittee by a vote of 18-0.**

**The House bill has two committee hearings remaining.**

**SB 1290 has not been heard by any Senate committees.**

Link to SB 1290: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/1290>

Link to HB 1001: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/1001>

### **Pharmacy Benefit Managers – Monitor**

The Florida Pharmacy Act establishes a set of protections for licensed pharmacies regarding audits by Pharmacy Benefits Managers (PBMs) and other payers. **HB 1155** by Rep. Jackie Toledo (R-Tampa) and **SB 390** by Senator Tom Wright (R-New Smyrna Beach) transfer the audit provisions of the Florida Pharmacy Act to the Florida Insurance Code. This change gives OIR the authority to enforce these provisions and respond to potential violations.

This week, the House bill was amended in committee to expressly authorize pharmacies to appeal audit findings made by health plans and PBMs using the existing dispute resolution program available through AHCA. The bill establishes a financial penalty for PBMs that fail to register with OIR in accordance with current law. To date, OIR has lacked the authority to actively enforce the registration requirement adopted by the Legislature in 2018.

Accordingly, the bill establishes a \$10,000 fine for any PBM failing to register with OIR.

The bill also expressly makes a health insurer or HMO responsible for violations of the pharmacy audit provisions, even if a PBM is contracted to manage pharmacy benefits on behalf of the insurer or HMO.

**On March 30, HB 1155 passed the Finance and Facilities Subcommittee by a vote of 17-0.**

**SB 390 has two Senate committee hearings remaining.**

Link to HB 1155: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/1155>

Link to SB 390: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/390>

### **Access to Health Care Practitioner Services – Oppose**

**HB 803** by Rep. Mike Caruso (R-Delray Beach) and **SB 1680** by Senator Ana Maria Rodriguez (R-Doral) exempt physicians and osteopathic physicians who provide pro bono services from continuing education requirements, allows the board to issue a limited number of restricted licenses to physicians not licensed in Florida to practice for 36 months in certain settings. The bills also increase the federal poverty level from 200 to 400 for the Access to Health Care Act.

**On March 31, SB 1680 passed the Health Policy Committee by a vote of 9-1 and is now in its last committee, the Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services.**

**HB 803 is in the Health & Human Services Committee, its last committee reference.**

Link to HB 803: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/803>

Link to SB 1680: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/1680>

### **Nonopioid Alternatives – Support**

**SB 530** by Senator Keith Perry (R-Gainesville) and **HB 725** by Rep. Scott Plakon (R-Longwood) allow health care practitioners to provide the required nonopioid alternative educational pamphlet in either an electronic format or in a printed format to patients or the patient’s representative. SB 530 was amended to prohibit health insurance policies from requiring that treatment with an opioid analgesic drug product or abuse-deterrent opioid analgesic drug product be attempted and have failed before authorizing the use of a nonopioid-based analgesic drug product.

**SB 530 passed the full Senate on March 18 by a vote of 39-0.**

**HB 725 is on the calendar of bills ready to be heard on the House floor.**

Link to SB 530: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/530>

Link to HB 725: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/725>

### **Informed Consent for Pelvic Examinations – Support**

Legislation passed in 2020 requires certain health care practitioners and medical students to obtain written consent from a patient or a patient’s representative before performing a pelvic exam. **SB 716** by Senator Lauren Book (D-Plantation) and **HB 361** by Rep. Evan Jenne (D-Dania Beach) amend and narrow the definition of “pelvic examination” and amend the current law requiring written consent for all pelvic examinations performed by health care practitioners and trainees.

HB 361 was amended in committee to revise the definition of pelvic examination to mean a manual examination of the organs of the female reproductive system. The bill also revises the emergency exception to the informed consent requirement allowing a health care practitioner to perform a pelvic examination without the written consent of the patient if the pelvic examination is necessary for the provision of emergency services and care or the patient has an emergency medical condition.

**On March 29, SB 716 passed the Judiciary Committee by a vote of 11-0 and the bill is now in the Rules Committee. On April 1, HB 361 passed the Professions & Public Health Subcommittee by a vote of 14-0.**

Link to SB 716: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/716>

Link to HB 361: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/361>

### **Medicaid Eligibility**

A budget conforming bill, **HB 5201** by the Health Care Appropriations Committee, extends postpartum Medicaid eligibility for pregnant women to 12 months and continues the policy of retroactive Medicaid eligibility for non-pregnant adults to the first day of the month in which an application for Medicaid is submitted. Most of the funding for the \$240 extension will come from pass-through funds from the federal government with the state committing about \$92 million. Currently, pregnant women are covered for only two months after the birth of a child. According to AHCA, the additional months of eligibility under the House’s conforming bill will apply to about 97,600 Florida women each year. The bill is supported by House Speaker Chris Sprowls (R-Palm Harbor) and the bipartisan Florida Woman’s Legislative Caucus.

**On March 31, HB 5201 passed the Appropriations Committee by a vote of 25-0 and is scheduled to be heard by the full House on April 7.**

Link to HB 5201: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/5201>

### **Personal Protective Equipment – Support**

Florida's Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) is tasked with managing the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including acquiring and distributing personal protective equipment (PPE) to local governments and health care providers. Currently, FDEM is required to develop and maintain logistics contracts with suppliers who can supply resources and commodities, such as generators, and other commonly needed supplies during a natural disaster. The division also operates and manages the State Logistics Response Center which stores the state's stockpile of resources. Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, PPE was not acquired to the extent needed for supporting a pandemic response.

**SB 1760** by Senator Ben Albritton (R-Wauchula) and **HB 1353** by Rep. Clay Yarborough (R-Jacksonville) require FDEM to maintain an inventory of PPE in reserve for declared emergencies caused by an infectious or communicable disease. The bills also require FDEM to plan for and procure PPE or have sufficient contracts in place for ensuring PPE availability in the event of a declared emergency and must make PPE available for purchase by healthcare practitioners or their employers at the cost procured or negotiated by the division, and may not sell such PPE at a price exceeding the purchase price.

On March 31, SB 1760 passed the Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee by a vote of 6-0 and has one final hearing remaining in the Appropriations Committee.

HB 1353 is in the Infrastructure & Tourism Appropriations Subcommittee.

Link to SB 1760: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/1760>

Link to HB 1353: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/1353>

### **Emergency Preparedness & Response Fund**

**HB 7047** by the House Pandemics & Public Emergencies Committee and **SB 2006** by Senator Danny Burgess (R-Zephyrhills) and the Senate Select Committee on Pandemic Preparedness and Response set policy and legislative intent for public health emergency planning, response and preparedness in Florida. The bills require the Division of Emergency Management (DEM) to include in the state comprehensive emergency management plan provisions addressing public-health-emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. The division must develop the provisions in consultation with the Department of Health and the Agency for Health Care Administration. The bills also provide additional oversight and transparency regarding exercises of the executive branch's emergency powers and authorizes the Legislature to pass a concurrent resolution to terminate orders and directives issued under a state of emergency, instead of only the state of emergency itself. The bills provide that the Governor can spend from funds appropriated for other purposes or from a proposed Emergency Preparedness and Response Fund through budget amendments.

On March 31, HB 7047 passed the Appropriations Committee by a vote of 22-2 and is now in the Health and Human Services Committee.

On March 31, SB 2006 passed the Appropriations Committee, its final committee reference, by a vote of 20-0 and is scheduled to be heard in the Rules Committee on April 6.

Link to HB 7047: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/7047>

Link to SB 2006: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/2006>

### **Dispensing Medicinal Drugs – Support**

**HB 29** by Rep. Matt Willhite (D-Wellington) and **SB 262** by Senator Gayle Harrell (R-Stuart) authorize hospitals to dispense 48-hour supply of medicinal drugs to the patient of an emergency room of the hospital or a patient discharged from a hospital. The Senate bill was amended to provide that the new conditions that authorize the prescribing of a controlled substance are subject to ss. 456.44 and 465.0276, F.S., which regulate the prescribing of controlled substances.

**HB 29 is on the calendar of bills ready for House floor consideration.**

**SB 262 is in the Appropriations Committee, its last stop.**

Link to HB 29: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/29>

Link to SB 262: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/262>

### **Telehealth – Support**

**HB 247** by Rep. Tom Fabricio (R-Miramar) allows practitioners to prescribe schedule III, IV, and V controlled substances using telehealth services and retains current law restrictions on prescribing Schedule II controlled substances through telehealth.

**HB 247 is now in the Health and Human Services Committee, its last committee reference.**

Link to HB 247: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/247>

### **Prohibited Acts by Health Care Practitioners – Support**

**HB 721** by Rep. Ralph Massullo and **SB 1142** by Senator Ray Rodrigues (R-Estero) prohibit health care practitioners from using certain specialty designations. The term "anesthesiologist" may only be used by licensed physicians and licensed dentists and the term "dermatologist" may only be used by licensed physicians.

SB 1142 was amended to add the making of misleading, deceptive, or fraudulent representations related to a practitioner's specialty designation as grounds for discipline. The bill requires that when DOH finds that a person has violated s. 456.072(1)(a), F.S., the department must issue an emergency cease and desist order and take disciplinary action if the person fails to comply with the order. The bill also provides for disciplinary action based on a licensed health care practitioner's failure to identify his or her specialty designation and requiring the DOH, not a practitioner regulatory board, to enforce s. 456.072(1)(t), F.S.

**On April 1, HB 721 passed the Professions & Public Health Subcommittee by a vote of 12-3 and is now in the Health & Human Services Committee.**

**SB 1142 is in the Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, its final committee referral.**

Link to HB 721: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/721>

Link to SB 1142: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/1142>

### **Health Care Practitioner Discipline – Support**

**SB 1934** by Senator Lauren Book (D-Plantation) and **HB 1579** by Rep. Vance Aloupis (R-Miami) expand DOH's authority to issue an emergency suspension order to all licensed health care practitioners and adds homicide to the list of offenses that DOH must issue an emergency suspension order. The legislation requires DOH to issue an emergency order suspending the license if a health care practitioner is arrested for committing or attempting, soliciting, or conspiring to commit any act that would constitute a violation of certain offenses in this state or similar offenses in another jurisdiction. The bills also

include such offenses as acts that constitute grounds for discipline of a licensed health care practitioner.

The Senate bill also adds to the offenses, for which if committed by a licensed practitioner, that DOH must consider issuing an Emergency Suspension Order (ESO) or an Emergency Restriction Order (ERO) of the license of that practitioner. The Senate bill requires the DOH to issue an ESO suspending the license of an allopathic or osteopathic pediatrician, or physician who treats children, if the physician is arrested for committing or attempting, soliciting, or conspiring to commit any act that would constitute a violation of any one of the listed criminal offenses involving a child or a similar offense in another jurisdiction. The bill directs the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) to analyze state laws and rules relating to grounds for health care practitioner discipline and ESOs of licenses, specifically with respect to criminal offenses, and to report to Executive and Legislative Branch leadership by January 1, 2022.

**HB 1579 is in the Health & Human Services Committee, its final committee reference.**

**SB 1934 is in the Rules Committee, its final committee reference.**

Link to SB 1934: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/1934>

Link to HB 1579: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/1579>

### **PIP - Motor Vehicle Insurance Reforms - Monitor**

**SB 54** by Senator Danny Burgess (R-Zephyrhills) and **HB 719** by Rep. Erin Grall (R-Vero Beach) repeal Florida's Motor Vehicle No-Fault Law which requires every owner and registrant of a motor vehicle in this state to maintain Personal Injury Protection (PIP) coverage. Beginning January 1, 2022, the bills enact financial responsibility requirements for liability for motor vehicle ownership or operation, as follows:

- For bodily injury (BI) or death of one person in any one crash, \$25,000, and
- Subject to that limit for one person, \$50,000 for BI or death of two or more people in any one crash.
- Existing \$10,000 financial responsibility requirement for property damage is retained.

The bills also require insurers to offer medical payments coverage (MedPay) to cover certain medical expenses and creates a new framework to govern all third-party claims against motor vehicle insurers for bad faith failure to settle a case. A technical amendment was adopted in committee to the House bill which deleted the unnecessary options language from the provision requiring MedPay to be offered without a deductible.

**On April 1, SB 54 was again scheduled to be debated on the Senate floor; however, Senator Burgess postponed the bill and it remains on the floor calendar for April 7.**

Link to SB 54: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/54>

Link to HB 719: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/719>

### **Consumer Protection Against Fraud During a Pandemic - Monitor**

**HB 9** by Rep. Ardian Zika (R-Land O' Lakes) and **SB 1608** by Senator Aaron Bean (R-Fernandina Beach) establish criminal penalties and authorizes civil remedies for those knowingly and willfully making a false or misleading statement or disseminating false or misleading information regarding the availability of, or access to, a COVID-19 vaccine.

**HB 9 is on the Senate calendar of bills ready to be heard by the full Senate.**

**SB 1608 is in the Rules Committee, its last committee reference.**

Link to HB 9: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/9>

Link to SB 1608: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/1608>