

May 27, 2022

The Honorable Sarah McBride  
Delaware General Assembly  
Legislative Hall  
411 Legislative Avenue  
Dover, DE 19901

Re: American Medical Association urges a “Yes” vote on Senate Bill 300 to support physician wellness and protect patient safety

Dear Senator McBride:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill (S.B.) 300, an act that would significantly support physicians’ health and wellness and protect patient safety. The AMA supports this bill because it will have a direct, positive impact in helping physicians and other health care professionals when experiencing burnout and otherwise supporting physicians’ and health professionals’ wellness in an evidence-based, confidential manner. We urge the Delaware Senate to vote “Yes” on this essential public health and wellness legislation.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, physician burnout was already a major challenge for the U.S. health care system, impacting nearly every aspect of clinical care. Recent studies show a national burnout rate of 43.9 percent among physicians in practice, including private practice, academic medical centers, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Physician and health care professional burnout can lead to devastating consequences for patients and physicians. Physicians and nurses are among the most resilient, but the pressures and responsibilities affecting them do not always allow for them to seek help or focus on what they need to remain resilient and healthy.

The AMA supports S.B. 300 because it makes clear distinctions that seeking care for wellness or related issues is not the same as being impaired. This distinction will encourage physicians to seek care because S.B. 300 specifically protects physicians who seek care from punitive actions such as loss of professional privileges. The bill also wisely retains the state’s interest in protecting patient safety if impairment does exist.

The distinctions in S.B. 300 are important because the COVID-19 pandemic has—in some parts of the country, including Delaware—pushed physician and health care professional burnout to crisis levels, as these professionals have been desperately needed on the frontlines to care for patients. For long periods of time during the pandemic, many physicians have been subject to extremely stressful conditions—conditions that have made them particularly vulnerable to negative mental and physical health effects. Stressors already present in their lives have become exacerbated, making the need to obtain confidential counseling or other care more important than ever. The AMA has undertaken a national campaign to distinguish how seeking assistance to ensure wellness is often separate and distinct from seeking care for an impairment—and that policy and care options provide for different levels of care while retaining key confidentiality protections to encourage physicians to seek the care they may need voluntarily.

The Honorable Sarah McBride

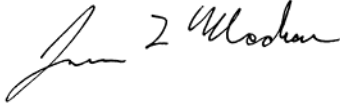
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S.B. 300 furthers these important policy and clinical practice priorities. For the above reasons, the AMA urges the Delaware Senate to vote “Yes” on S.B. 300. If you have any questions, please contact Daniel Blaney-Koen, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, Advocacy Resource Center, at [daniel.blaney-koen@ama-assn.org](mailto:daniel.blaney-koen@ama-assn.org) or (312) 464-4954.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Medical Society of Delaware