

January 21, 2022

The Honorable Amish Shah, MD, MPH  
State Representative  
Arizona State Capitol Complex  
1700 W. Washington Street  
Room 123  
Phoenix, AZ 85007

The Honorable Joanne Osborne  
State Representative  
Arizona State Capitol Complex  
1700 W. Washington Street  
Room 112  
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Re: American Medical Association Support for House Bill 2429  
“Physician Wellness Programs”

Dear Dr. Shah and Representative Osborne:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I am writing in strong support of House Bill 2429 (H.B. 2429), “Physician Wellness Programs.” The AMA supports this bill because it will have a direct, positive impact to help physicians experiencing burnout and otherwise support physician wellness in an evidence-based, confidential manner. We urge the Arizona House of Representatives 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 burnout can lead to devastating consequences for patients and physicians. Physicians are among the most resilient, but the pressures and responsibilities affecting physicians do not always allow for opportunities for them to seek help or focus on what they need to remain resilient and healthy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has in some parts of the country pushed physician burnout to crisis levels, as physicians have been desperately needed on the frontlines to care for patients. Many physicians have for long periods of time been subject to extremely stressful conditions during the pandemic—conditions that have made them particularly vulnerable to negative mental and physical health effects. Stressors already present in physicians’ lives have become exacerbated, making the need to be able to obtain confidential counseling or other care more important than ever. It is important, furthermore, 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 AMA supports H.B. 2429 because it clearly addresses the above issues and concerns in a straightforward manner that:

- Encourages health care professionals to seek care when needed in a wellness program that can directly respond to the professional’s wellness needs.

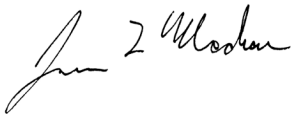
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- Ensures that a record of a health professional's participation in a wellness program is confidential and has additional legal protections that should provide further encouragement to physicians to seek help when needed.
- Balances the appropriate role of the medical board to protect the public safety for an impaired physician with the public need to encourage physicians to seek help for issues that may be causing high levels of stress that can be successfully addressed through a physician wellness program.

For the above reasons, the AMA urges the Arizona House to vote "Yes" on H.B. 2429. 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 cursive script, appearing to read "Jim L Madara".

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Arizona Medical Association