



# amsa

American Medical Student Association

## Policy in Action at AMSA

### **Policy: Johns Hopkins Pushes Revised Anatomical Gift Act in Maryland State Legislature**

When Atul Nakhasi and other medical students at Johns Hopkins learned about some of the flaws in the current organ donation program through one of their classes, they decided to see how their own state measured up. They found that the state of Maryland lagged behind several others in conforming with [new federal guidelines](#) meant to ensure that the wishes of the patient-donor are not undermined by well-meaning family members after the donor's death. Through further research they learned that the new federal guidelines had been introduced in the Maryland State Legislature the previous year as "[The Revised Anatomical Gift Act](#)," but had stalled out in committee. They decided to mobilize around the issue, first holding an Advocacy Day in early March 2011 at the State Capitol (where they met with the bill's sponsors and other legislators), then making a grassroots phone-banking push in late March to drive the bill through. Their bill was passed in early April, meaning that several hundred more patients will be able to receive organ transplants each year in the state of Maryland.

### **Health Care Reform: Health Professions Lobby Day in California Founded by AMSA Members**

Six years ago two California AMSA students discovered their mutual passion for single payer healthcare at AMSA's National Convention and decided to organize their fellow medical students to rally and lobby at the Capitol in Sacramento, CA. Since 2006, this movement has grown to include over 3000 students and has changed its name to California Health Professional Student Alliance (CaHPSA) to include allied health professional students as well as medical students. This year 300 health professional students representing over 30 schools in California and 15 degree programs joined 300 community members on the steps of the Capitol to voice their support for California Universal Health Care Act, SB810 (Leno). After the rally, the students met with almost every member of Congress and left information packets with those they did not meet. Although most students attend lobby day due to an interest in single payer, the students learn the specifics of the bill, as well as how to lobby at a seven-hour training the day before. Erica Brode, Chair of AMSA's Community and Environmental Health Committee, has attended the California Lobby Day every year since it's founding and had this to say: "It is exciting and inspiring to see the political empowerment of the next generation of healthcare leaders, especially around comprehensive, affordable healthcare for all."

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### **Community and Environmental Health: AMSA Members in TN Take on Childhood Obesity**

Vanderbilt Medical School in Nashville is located just 10 minutes from the state capitol. After attending National Convention in March of 2008, Vanderbilt student David Marcovitz began to research issues impacting health on the state level and also to meet with the heads of organizations like the TN Academy of Family Physicians, the TN Academy of Pediatrics, the TMA, as well as faculty members at Vanderbilt. Since childhood obesity emerged as one of the most compelling issues facing the state, he asked each organization leader: "What are you planning to do next year about childhood obesity in TN, and how can the medical students help?" Surprisingly few of them has a concrete answer, so he and other students worked with a faculty member at Vanderbilt to develop their own policy proposal modeled off of what other states were doing with sugar-sweetened beverage taxes. It was now summer and as the new M1s arrived on the scene; they created a committee within their AMSA chapter called the "Legislative Affairs Steering Committee" and wrote position descriptions for 8 members of the committee that they hoped to fill with M1s (who they hoped to convince that AMSA was the place for health policy gurus). There would be a committee chair, two grassroots chairs (to build a database of supporters), two policy chairs (who would meet with outside organizations), a policy analyst, and a campaign coordinator (who would handle PR and event planning), and a legislative coordinator (to schedule meetings with legislators and build a portfolio on them). They started holding meetings in August that were biweekly, held a "campaign kick-off", made calls to other chapters in the state, began meeting with legislators, and found co-sponsors in the TN House and Senate. Though the bill never made it out of committee the first year, they attracted a good amount of media attention for the issue. And in 2010-2011, the bill's original co-sponsors decided to bring an even stronger version of the original bill that would have generated over 80 million in revenues from sugar sweetened beverage taxes and decreased the food tax by the same proportion. Most exciting of all, the sponsors asked the local AMSA chapter at Vanderbilt to lead the health-related aspects of the media campaign around the bill.

### **Chicago Medical Student Lobby Day 2011**

Driven by the belief that health care should be treated as a human right rather than a commodity, several Chicagoland AMSA chapters recently teamed up with other [Illinois Single Payer Coalition organizations](#) to support [H.R. 311, the Illinois Universal Health Care Act](#). The Illinois Universal Health Care Act would establish a single payer system in the Land of Lincoln and enable all Illinois citizens to access the medical care they need when they need it. On April 11, 2011, students from Rush, Northwestern and Chicago Medical School joined forces on the Illinois State Capitol in Springfield, IL to show their support for H.R. 311. In addition to meeting with state legislators, AMSA members also participated in a press conference. [Aderonke Bangbose, a chapter leader at Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine, described her family's tragic story to illustrate the need for single payer health care](#) reform in Illinois. Following Lobby Day, these AMSA chapters continue to work in support of H.R. 311 and hope to see Illinois pass universal health care legislation this year.