

The 2015-2016 Legislative Agenda of the American Medical Student Association

Cover Page

Health policy, at the local, state, and federal, must be continuously reviewed and updated to address and support the healthcare needs of patients in the United States and around the world. The American Medical Student Association (AMSA) releases a yearly legislative agenda that presents our policy objectives for the year as they relate to our mission and principles. AMSA's mission is reflected in our four aspirations: Quality, Affordable Healthcare for All, Global Health Equity, Enriching Medicine Through Diversity, and Professional Integrity, Development and Student Well-Being. Within this agenda one will find AMSA's policy priorities for the year as well as more information on our ongoing campaigns. Overall, ensuring equity and access to quality healthcare remains a priority. This includes extending our ideas of healthcare beyond the clinic and into communities to include the social determinants of health and to foster health at every level of society. Specifically, health policy must address the various environmental challenges, forecasted physician shortage, reproductive rights, and sexual and gender minority population health disparities that have or will negatively affect public health. Furthermore, global health and the forces that impact it, including upcoming trade agreements, policies impacting access to scientific data, and health systems strengthening remain a priority.

Thus for a healthier tomorrow, AMSA calls on local, state, and federal government as well as international players and fellow health advocates to support the following health policy recommendations to enhance domestic and global health promoting healthcare for all, global health equity, diversity in medicine, and professionalism in the field of medicine.

Health Care For All

AMSA supports universal access to quality, affordable healthcare. In pursuit of healthcare for all, AMSA will:

- A. Support political and policy measures at the national and local levels that improve and expand access to care. Support Federal Single-Payer legislation (H.R. 676)¹
 - Support state-level single-payer initiatives²
 - Support Medicaid expansion^{2,3}
 - Support expansion of other publicly financed coverage²
 - Oppose measures that threaten access to care
- B. Support healthcare for all that places emphasis on not only coverage, but social and economic factors that limit access for specific groups and hinder the quality of care available to different members of the population

- Support measures aimed at reducing health disparities and promoting equitable treatment regardless of socioeconomic status, income, race, ethnicity, immigration status, sex, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity⁴
 - Support measures that expand primary care and preventative medicine⁵
 - Oppose measures that go against those listed above
- C. Support measures that aim to reduce the cost of healthcare plans, increase the affordability of treatments, and increase the quality of care
- Support measures that reduce drug costs and limit out-of-pocket expenses⁶
 - Support research into increasing the efficiency of healthcare in the US such as through increased funding for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality⁷
 - Support measures that ensure cost and quality effectiveness Oppose measures that go against those listed above⁸
 - Oppose measures that go against those listed above

Global Health

AMSA supports the strengthening of global health systems, with emphasis on access and quality. Specifically, AMSA will:

- A. Support US government funding for comprehensive family planning and reproductive health services both nationally and abroad, opposing policies that limit access to abortion services⁹
- Oppose the reintroduction of the Global Gag Policy language into the House FY 2016 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill
- B. Support increased US government foreign funding allocations for global public health systems strengthening, support policies which encourage equitable knowledge exchange, and support the formation transnational health education partnerships¹⁰
- C. Advocate for transparency within international trade agreement negotiations
- D. Oppose trade regulations which extend the intellectual property protections of pharmaceutical companies thus limiting the global production of and access to safe and affordable generic medications¹¹
- E. Oppose Investor State Dispute Settlements that give private companies the right to challenge national sovereignty.

LGBTQ

AMSA promotes equality and justice for sexual and gender minority individuals through measures that oppose discrimination and oppression and increase access to quality and comprehensive healthcare. In pursuit of equality and justice, AMSA will:

- A. Support state and federal legislation that prevents employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity (there is no federal law that consistently protects LGBT individuals from employment discrimination; there are no state laws in 29 states that explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, and in 32 states that do so based on gender identity).
 - Support the re-introduction of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) into Congress
- B. Support statewide measures that prohibit discrimination against transgender and gender nonconforming individuals in employment, housing, public accommodations and the extension of credit.
- C. Oppose discrimination in health insurance for transgender and gender nonconforming individuals, and support measures that allow for access to safe, respectful healthcare that is appropriate to individuals, regardless of their gender identity or expression.¹²
 - Support equal insurance coverage in public health programs like Medicaid for the specific, medically necessary healthcare needs of transgender individuals like hormone therapy and/or transition-related surgeries.
 - Support the re-introduction of the Repeal Existing Policies that Encourage and Allow Legal (REPEAL) HIV Discrimination Act into Congress
 - Support the re-introduction of the Real Education for Healthy Youth Act into Congress

Women's Health

AMSA supports the right to comprehensive reproductive healthcare services, including abortion, for all individuals. Specifically, AMSA will:

- A. Oppose measures which unnecessarily restrict access to family planning services, including abortion, based on claims inconsistent with scientific evidence¹³. Oppose such measures at any local state or national level.
 - Oppose the Pain capable unborn child protection act (H.R.36) and all local measures citing the scientifically unfounded claim that a fetus may feel pain as the basis of implementation of a pre-viability abortion ban
 - Oppose legislation requiring doctors to “inform” patients of medical abortion reversal procedures, despite a lack of scientific evidence that such reversals are possible.
 - Oppose measures requiring the presentation of identification to obtain abortion services
 - Oppose measures requiring a waiting period of any length to obtain abortion services
 - Oppose measures requiring local hospital admitting privileges for doctors performing abortions in out-patient clinics

- Oppose measures requiring that outpatient clinics providing abortion services meet surgical center building requirements
- B. Oppose measures which block access to cancer screening services, irrespective of what other services the cancer screener provides.

AMSA supports efforts, including the designation of federal funding, to increase access to reproductive health education and healthcare services. Specifically, AMSA will:

- A. Oppose the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education (LHHS) spending bill for FY 2016 budget measures significantly decreasing funding for the evidence-based Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program (TPPP) while increasing funding for abstinence-only programs, without any meaningful evidence criteria¹⁴, and cuts to Title X family planning funding, in particular the House version completely de-funding the program¹⁵.
- Oppose H.R. 217 Title X abortion provider Prohibition act, which prevents federal funding of family planning clinics providing abortion services
 - Oppose H.R. 7/ S. 582: No Taxpayer funding for abortion and abortion insurance full disclosure act of 2015, which prevents federal funding from being used to cover abortion services or any healthcare plan that includes abortion coverage
 - Support the Equal Access to Abortion Coverage in Health Insurance (EACH Women) Act (H.R. 2972), which overturns the Hyde Amendment and ensure that all women receiving healthcare or insurance thru the federal government also have access to abortion care.
 - Oppose any legislation eliminating federal funding for Planned Parenthood
- B. Support measures which increase the availability and accessibility of contraceptives¹⁶. Oppose any measure that allows for the elimination of contraceptive coverage by health insurance plans¹⁷.
- Support measures requiring coverage for the dispensation of a 12-month contraceptive supply
 - Support over the counter availability status for oral contraceptive pills in conjunction with continued mandated insurance coverage of FDA approved contraceptives.
 - Oppose the Allowing Greater Access to Safe and Effective Contraception Act (S.1438), which supports over the counter oral contraceptive availability at the cost of dismantling requirements for contraceptive coverage by health insurance
 - Support the Affordability is Access Act (S. 1532) which would mandate health insurance coverage of over the counter and FDA approved contraceptives
 - Advocate for of all efforts to fund programs providing free comprehensive contraception to all women, including all forms of long acting reversible contraception and regardless of insurance coverage status

Medical Education

AMSA supports national subsidized Graduate Medical Education (GME) residency positions. In addition to increasing visibility and lobbying for funding, AMSA will¹⁸⁻²⁰:

- A. Oppose language from the Balance Budget Act of 1997, which puts a cap nationally on the number and availability of GME positions
- B. Support maintaining current funding levels for GME, and then to expanding increase in GME funding and increase in the number of positions to properly serve growing U.S. population.
- C. Support the Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2013 (H.R. 1180/S. 577), which would create 15,000 new positions over 5 years.
- D. Support the Creating Access to Residency Education (CARE) Act of 2014 (H.R. 1117), which would award grants or enter into contracts to create or expand medical residency training programs in states where there are fewer than 25 medical residents per 100,000 people.

AMSA supports efforts to have the availability of student loan consolidation, refinancing and graduated repayment, in lieu of reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. Specifically, AMSA will:

- A. Support continued federal direct lending for students.
- B. Supports the development of low interest loan programs, which offer students a fair and practical solution to the funding of medical education
- C. Support legislation, which would make the cost of tuition, books and essential educational materials tax deductible for students engaged in graduate and professional education
- D. Support the deferment of payment on the principal and accrued interest of educational loans incurred for premedical and medical education until the completion of medical training, including internship and residency
- E. Support the National Health Services Corps (NHSC) and other loan repayment and scholarship programs, such as the NIH Scholars program

AMSA supports measures that improve the process of student loan forgiveness. Specifically, AMSA will²¹⁻²³:

- A. Support measures that exclude the forgiven amount of debt at the conclusion of a payment plan as taxable income
- B. Oppose measures that place a cap on debt forgiven through public service loan forgiveness

AMSA supports increasing public access to peer reviewed scientific research to encourage dissemination and expansion of scientific discovery and innovation. To achieve this, AMSA will²⁴⁻²⁶:

- A. Support legislation that mandates open access to publically funded research (Fair Access to Science and Technology Research Act S.779)
- B. Support the creation of a centralized and comprehensive national registry of all publicly and privately funded clinical trials involving drugs, biological products, or devices regardless of the outcome of the trial

Environmental, Community, and Public Health

AMSA seeks to address the concerning health implications of climate change, described by the Lancet Commission as “the biggest global health threat of the 21st century²⁷.” To do so, AMSA will²⁸:

- A. Support and gain awareness for current national and international policies that aim to mitigate the health threat posed by climate change, with particular attention given to the needs of vulnerable populations.
- B. Support legislation and regulations that aim to achieve substantial and sustainable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.
 - Support timely and full implementation of the Clean Power Plan, released by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in June 2014, which introduces standards that would reduce carbon pollution from the power sector by 30 percent in 2030.
 - Oppose legislative efforts that aim to hinder the EPA’s ability to regulate carbon emissions. The FY16 Interior & Environment Appropriations Bill passed by the House and Senate have concerning provisions that would restrict the EPA’s ability to limit greenhouse gas emissions from existing power plants and would delay or block needed updates to the national ozone standard.
 - Advocate for renewal of tax credits (for business and industry as well as homeowners) to incentivize clean energy.

AMSA promotes the development of healthier and more equitable environments in communities. Specifically, AMSA will²⁹⁻³⁰:

- A. Support policies that promote “fair housing” by providing adequate resources to housing residents and protecting victims of discrimination.
 - Oppose legislation that hinders the implementation and enforcement of the Fair Housing Act. The Transportation and Housing and Urban Development (T-HUD) funding bill (H.R. 2577), and the Commerce, Justice and Science (CJS) appropriations bill (H.R. 2578), both passed the House with concerning amendments that would undermine the Fair Housing Act.

HIV/AIDS

AMSA supports consistent financial and personnel support for policies integral to ending the HIV/AIDS crisis. In pursuit of the end of the HIV/AIDS crisis, AMSA will:

- A. Support increased funding for President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, and legislative-policy initiatives that provide support to small and large, private and public, national and international organizational efforts (research, education, etc) that address the fight to end HIV/AIDS worldwide.^{31,32,33}
- B. Request for the Senate Appropriations Committee and the House Appropriations Committee to increase the PEPFAR 2016 budget by an additional \$300 million this fiscal year.

AMSA will combat the stigma and discrimination that HIV positive and AIDS individuals face. Specifically, AMSA will:

- A. Combat the public stigma against harm reduction programs, such as needle exchange programs which reduce HIV and Hepatitis C with IV drug use.³⁴
 - Urge for stronger government support towards recognition of needle exchange programs as an effective, permanent public health service; especially following the recent policy change in allowing for government funds to go towards temporary needle exchange programs in light of public health emergencies - as observed in the HIV outbreak in Indiana due to IV drug use of the prescription drug, Opana.³⁴
 - Urge for the federal ban on needle exchange programs to be completely lifted and to allow for states to utilize their own public health funding towards syringe exchange programs.³⁴

AMSA supports fair access to HIV/AIDS treatment medication Globally:

- A. See Global Health sections C-E for priorities relating to trade agreements and access to medicines.

References:

¹ Principles Regarding Quality, Affordable, Healthcare for All in the United States. Section 2. P28.

- ² Principles Regarding Quality, Affordable, Healthcare for All in the United States. Section 7. P29.
- ³ Principles Regarding Medicaid. Section 1, 3. P105.
- ⁴ Principles Regarding Health Disparities. Section 1, 4-6. P145.
Principles Regarding Health Equity. Section 1-5, 7. P150-152.
Principles Regarding Violence and Hate Crimes. Section 5, 13. P125, 127.
Principles Regarding Gender Identity. Section 1. P153.
Principles Regarding Immigrant Health. Section 1-3, 8. P154-155.
Principles Regarding Reproductive Rights, Family Planning, and Sex Education. Section 1-4. P51-52.
Principles Regarding Quality, Affordable, Healthcare for All in the United States. Section 3. P28.
Principles Regarding Sexuality. Section 9. P124.
- ⁵ Principles Regarding Preventative Medicine and Public Health. Section 2, 3, 4, 10. P83-85.
Principles Regarding Primary Care and Family Medicine. Section 3, 5, 7-10. P31-32.
Principled Regarding Service in Underserved Areas and Service Obligations. Section 1, 2, 4, 6. P26-27.
- ⁶ Principles Regarding Pharmaceuticals & Medical Devices. Section 1-3, 7. P40-41, 43.
- ⁷ Principles Regarding Professionalism and Professional Liability. Section 7. P37
- ⁸ Principles Regarding Quality, Affordable, Healthcare for All in the United States. Section 5, 8, 9. P28-29.
- ⁹ Principles Regarding International Health. Section 4a. P98.
- ¹⁰ Principles Regarding International Health. Sections 9-10. P98-99.
- ¹¹ Principles Regarding International Trade Agreements. Section 3. P142.
- ¹² Principles Regarding Gender Identity 1f, g
- ¹³ Principles Regarding Reproductive Rights, Family Planning and Sex Education 2a, c, 3h
- ¹⁴ Principles Regarding Reproductive Rights, Family Planning and Sex Education 1, 3c1a, 5a-e, 5h-j
- ¹⁵ Principles Regarding Reproductive Rights, Family Planning and Sex Education 3c1b, 4b
- ¹⁶ Principles Regarding Reproductive Rights, Family Planning and Sex Education 2a, 3c1b, d, i, j
- ¹⁷ Principles Regarding Reproductive Rights, Family Planning and Sex Education 3f, g
- ¹⁸ Principles Regarding Graduate Medical Education and Specialty Distribution: 39
- ¹⁹ Principles Regarding Graduate Medical Education and Specialty Distribution: 40
- ²⁰ Principles Regarding Graduate Medical Education and Specialty Distribution: 41
- ²¹ Principles Regarding Financing of Medical Education: 5a
- ²² Principles Regarding Financing of Medical Education: 6b, 6c
- ²³ Principles Regarding Financing of Medical Education: 8b,8c
- ²⁴ Principles Regarding Preventative Medicine and Public Health: 2a
- ²⁵ Principles Regarding International Health: 9
- ²⁶ Principles Regarding Research: 9a

²⁷ Costello, A. et al. (2009). Managing the health effects of climate change. *The Lancet* Commissions, 373(9676). [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(09\)60935-1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(09)60935-1)

²⁸ Principles Regarding Climate Change. Sections 1-15. P150

²⁹ Principles Regarding Human Rights. Section 2C. P86

³⁰ Principles Regarding Care of the Homeless and Indigent. Section 15. P115.

³¹ Principles Regarding Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and HIV-Related Illnesses. Section 11.

³² Principles Regarding Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and HIV-Related Illnesses. Section 12.

³³ Principles Regarding Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and HIV-Related Illnesses. Section 9c.

³⁴ Principles Regarding Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and HIV-Related Illnesses. Section 8c.