

KAFP Legislative Update
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FPs Making a Capitol Difference

Anthropologist Margaret Mead is quoted as saying, *“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”* The KAFP Advocacy Day participants got to experience this in action, as four member physicians presented on *family medicine* before the House Health and Human Service Committee on Wednesday.

Admittedly, it is rare to see a significant change in direction with just one legislative hearing, but that is just what happened with a stellar lineup of physicians. The presentation began with Dr. Rick Kellerman, Wichita, discussing the training of physicians from medical school through residency programs. He followed that with maps showing where the KU School of Medicine’s graduates are practicing in Kansas, where family physicians are practicing across the state, and where OB/GYN services are being provided.

Dr. LaDona Schmidt, Salina, followed with a comparison of APRN and physician training. Her testimony was particularly compelling, because she was trained and certified as a nurse practitioner, prior to going through medical school. This was important because the committee has been bombarded by APRN and nurse midwife entities, demanding practice independent of a collaborative physician agreement and who claim their training is equivalent to that of family physicians.

Next was Dr. Doug Gruenbacher, Quinter, who provided the perspective of a family physician practicing in a rural setting. He talked about the process as he and his wife, Shelley, also a family physician, made the decision to practice there. He mentioned some of the programs that are helping to attract physicians to rural and under-served counties in the state, including the Kansas Medical Student Loan Program. Perhaps most importantly, he provided legislators with a snapshot of a common day in his practice, including ending a particular day with a house call to a friend and neighbor where he delivered the painful news that this person had a life-threatening cancer. There were no dry eyes on that committee when he finished.

Ending the all-star team was Dr. Jennifer Bacani McKenney, Fredonia, who took the committee from tears to laughter. In her usual upbeat style, she relayed her experience of returning to her hometown to practice and what led her to do so. She discussed the impact of a recent hospital closure in Independence – its impact on that community and all of the surrounding health care providers, including her. While there has been much publicity about the hospital closing and the loss of the physicians there, she was able to relate a first-hand view of the impact on patients and the medical community.

It is rare at the Capitol, but the committee chairman, his committee members, and others in the audience were absolutely and positively overwhelmed by the excellence of the overall presentation. They couldn’t seem, at times, to find words for how meaningful they found it to be.

Later Wednesday afternoon, the committee chairman, Rep. Dan Hawkins, Wichita, was among the legislative speakers at the KAFP advocacy event. He told the audience, as well as the KAFP lobbyist, that

it had changed his mind on the direction of the APRN and nurse midwives' legislation pending before his committee.

Other legislators addressing the group that afternoon were:

- *Sen. Jeff King*, Independence, vice-president of the Senate, who discussed Medicaid expansion and said he thought it would not pass the Legislature this year, but may have a good chance in 2017;
- *Sen. Laura Kelly*, Topeka, a perpetual favorite, who provided an overview of the budget and the "state of the state," discussing the real crisis Kansas faces. She also stressed the importance of family physicians getting actively informed and involved in elections; and,
- *Rep. Jim Ward*, Wichita, who gave a most impassioned discussion of Medicaid expansion and the need for greater focus on the health care system in Kansas.

There are not words to adequately describe KAFP's legislative day, but both the physicians who presented and all who spent time with legislators that day made a definite difference. While Facebook posts aren't often appropriate for newsletters, this article will end with a post by the KAFP government relations consultant on Wednesday evening:

"Today was a great day. The only way to describe the feeling is to think about how a coach feels when his team hits a grand slam. There are no words. You just experience it and know awesome when you're in the midst of it. I am grateful to work with Carolyn Gaughan, Diane Leahy Steere and others involved in the Kansas Academy of Family Physicians. They truly are the backbone, heart and soul of health care in Kansas - they hold it all together for us."

Family Doctor of the Day

Appreciation also goes out to Academy members who served as Doctor of the Day at the Kansas Capitol this week. Your simple gift of service makes a difference to so many, especially those who are away from their hometown physicians and needing medical attention. Following are those who served this past week: *Dr. Sheryl Beard*, Andover; *Dr. Shelley Gruenbacher*, Quinter; *Dr. Jen Brull*, Plainville; and *Dr. Jared Johnson*, Wichita. Thank you for taking time from your busy practices to serve those in the Capitol.

Committee Hearings the Week of February 1, 2016

Monday, Feb 1

1:30pm, House Health & Human Services, Room 546-S

Hearing on: [HB 2518](#) – *Mandatory electronic filing of death certificates*

Tuesday, Feb 2

10:30am, Senate Federal & State Affairs, Room 144-S

Hearing on: [SB 225](#) – *Interstate compact for recognition of EMS personnel licensure*

1:30pm, Senate Public Health & Welfare, Room 118-N

Hearing on: [SB 122](#) – *Hospital facility fees*

Wednesday, Feb 3

1:30pm, Senate Public Health & Welfare, Room 118-N

Hearing on: [SB 363](#) – *Relating to licensure of acupuncturists*

1:30pm, House Health & Human Services, Room 546-S

Hearing on: [HB 2058](#) – *Hospitals; regarding designated lay caregivers; duties, policies, procedures*

Thursday, Feb 4

1:30pm, House Health & Human Services, Room 546-S

Discussion & possible action on:

[HB 2456](#) – *Interstate Medical Licensure Compact*

[HB 2324](#) – *Stillbirth research and dignity act*

1:30pm, House Corrections & Juvenile Justice, Room 152-S

Hearing on: [HB 2540](#) – Adding & amending substances included in schedules I, III and IV of the Uniform Controlled Substances Act