

2026 House of Delegates Government Affairs Report Claudine Leone



NJAFP continues to be actively engaged in state policy in Trenton. In January 2026 New Jersey has a new Governor, Mikie Sherrill (D) and the NJ Legislature (Democrat Majority in both houses) began a new two-year legislative session. NJAFP continues to focus its advocacy on primary care workforce, administrative hassle factors, scope of practice expansions, loan redemption, and primary care investment.

Key Legislative Successes in 2025-2026

- **Medicaid Parity with Medicare for Primary Care:** NJAFP working with the NJ Health Care Quality Institute successfully advocated for Medicaid-Medicare parity for primary care. The 2026 budget included \$45 Million in additional funding for adult and pediatric primary care codes, which was implemented by the Division of Medicaid in Fall 2025.
- **Primary Care Loan Redemption Program Reforms:** The NJAFP was successful amending the existing Primary Care Loan Redemption to achieve key improvements that will make it easier for family medicine practices to qualify as authorized sites and hire new physicians under the program improving opportunities for loan recipients in the program. Assemblyman/Majority Leader Greenwald was our key champion on this effort which took several years to accomplish. July 1, 2026 will be the first budget year the new criteria will be put in place for program applicants. The program was also fully funded at around \$4 Million for \$200,000 loan redemption for four years of working in a medically underserved area.
- **Telemedicine Pay Parity Extension:** NJAFP successfully advocated for telemedicine parity (virtual = in person) to continue in New Jersey through July 1, 2026. NJAFP is currently advocating for permanent payment parity in New Jersey prior to this expiration.
- **Ensuring Fairness in Copay Accumulators Act:** NJAFP supported legislation that was signed into law by Governor Murphy that requires third-party discounts and payments for individuals covered by health benefits plans to apply to patients' copayments, coinsurance, deductibles, or other out-of-pocket costs for covered benefits.
- **Ending Waiting Periods for Wellness Exams:** NJAFP worked with other primary care colleagues to support this bill signed by Governor Murphy that requires health insurers in New Jersey to cover certain preventive or wellness visits at least once per calendar year without imposing a waiting period, so patients are not forced to wait a full 12 months between annual wellness visits. This applies to state regulated health plans, including the SHBP, SEHBP and other state plans. It does not apply to Medicaid.

APN Independent Practice Update

- **APN Independent Practice:** After 13 years of successfully defeating the APN Independent Practice efforts in Trenton, this March 2026 Governor Sherrill signed legislation authorizing APN independent practice in primary care and psychiatry specialties. This legislative loss came on the heels of former Governor Murphy finally rescinding the COVID EO waiving collaboration/joint protocol requirements for APNs. APNs were able to convince the Legislature and Governor Sherrill that the physician workforce shortage in these two specialty areas, access to care issues, and given the EO was in place for six years justified supporting the bill. NJAFP was able to get several key amendments in the bill, and we are working with the state on the emergency regulations necessary to implement the law (see below). NJAFP with the support of AAFP was all hands-on deck with member engagement launching several Calls to Action assisting our members to communicate directly with their individual state legislators on the bill.

What NJAFP's Working on for 2026

- **APN Independent Practice Emergency Regulations:** NJAFP is working closely with the NJ Division of Consumer Affairs, the Governor's Office, and the Senate President to ensure the limiting provisions that we were able to get in the law are properly incorporated into the regulations and implemented, as intended.
- **Schedule II CDS Prescribing Changes for Follow-up Visits:** Governor Sherrill recently rescinded the Murphy-era COVID waiver of the requirement for in person follow-ups every 90 days to continue prescriptions for Schedule II CDS. During COVID telehealth could be used for these 90 day follow-up visits. Practices are now required by May 16, 2026 to see all patients with current Schedule II CDS prescriptions to continue these prescriptions. This includes stimulants for adult patients. NJAFP is promoting legislation that would reauthorize the use of telehealth for 90-day follow-ups for Schedule II medications, however, this NJAFP policy is still in development, and we are working with Assemblywoman Katz on bill language.
- **New Jersey Primary Care Physician Train and Retain Program:** NJAFP is in the initial stage to promote the establishment of a statewide loan repayment incentive program specifically for primary care physicians who completed their training at a family medicine or other primary care specialty residency program. We are working with a health system with family medicine residencies to develop this program and get state buy in during this upcoming budget cycle.
- **Expansion of Medicaid funded Family Medicine Residency Slots:** NJAFP is in preliminary stages of discussions to potentially support the creation of ten new Medicaid-funded family medicine residency slots which would be made available by the state on a competitive basis to existing accredited New Jersey residency training programs that have maximized their available federal Medicare GME funding. This is very new and more information to come.
- **Primary Care Investment:** NJAFP continues to advocate for New Jersey to adopt a policy prioritizing an increased primary care investment for state regulated health plans, including Medicaid. Our state Medicaid program's MCO's primary care investment percentages are in the low single digits. Promoting PC Investment has been a challenge in the state, but we are hoping with the new Administration there will be new opportunities for discussion.

NJAFP as a Key Stakeholder and Advocacy Resource

NJAFP continues to be the go-to physician specialty organization on all things primary care for both the media and for policy makers. Here are some examples:

- **Dr. Kevin Berg**, NJAFP President-elect, represented NJAFP at the Inauguration events held in honor of Governor Mike Sherrill in January 2026.
- **Dr. Ken Kronhaus**, NJAFP President, joined Claudine Leone at private physician event for NJ Senate President Nick Scutari in March 2026.
- **Dr. Sara Leonard**, NJAFP Board Chair, participated in a March 2026 Physician Specialty Society President's Meeting hosted by MSNJ to share NJAFP's advocacy priorities.
- **Dr. Ken Kronhaus and Dr. Kevin Berg** with Claudine Leone met with Assemblywoman Katz to discuss her newly introduced bill that addresses the recent and abrupt changes to telemedicine visits for Schedule II Controlled Substances in April 2026.
- **Dr. Ken Kronhaus**, NJAFP President, submitted an op-ed to several media outlets addressing the impact on access to care and our patients after the announced Optum practice closures throughout the state at the end of 2025 and early 2026.

The Value of Having Two Physician Legislators in Trenton

- **Assemblywoman and Dr. Margie Donlon and Assemblyman and Dr. John Azzariti:** In 2026 our physician legislators used their voices in an unprecedented way proactively lobbying their colleagues and the Governor in opposition to the APN Independent Practice legislation highlighting the many and significant concerns with the bill.

10+ Years of Collaboration with Other Physician Specialties

NJAFP continues its collaboration in Trenton with 15+ physician specialty organizations through the Access to Care Coalition. This partnership began over 10 years ago when we discovered we had more in common with advocacy priorities in Trenton. The Coalition has focused on various scope of practice expansion efforts by non-physicians, telemedicine parity, as well as administrative hassles. The lobbyists representing these organizations meet weekly to discuss health care policy and pending legislation to see where we may support each other's advocacy interests.

For more information, please contact Claudine Leone at claudine@njgac.com.