



Palm Beach County Medical Society

Since 1919

2026 Legislative Agenda

Advocating for Physicians. Protecting Patients. Strengthening Florida's Health Care System.

Overview

The Palm Beach County Medical Society (PBCMS) represents physicians across every specialty who are united by a single mission: ensuring Floridians have access to safe, high-quality, physician-led care. Decisions made in Tallahassee have a direct impact on how doctors practice medicine, how hospitals operate, and how patients receive care. The following priorities outline our focus for the upcoming legislative session.

1. Preventing Inappropriate Scope of Practice Expansion

Last session, Florida saw a surge of proposals to expand independent practice for non-physician practitioners, such as chiropractors seeking prescription authority and CRNAs pursuing independent practice. Some even advanced through the House.

PBCMS Position:

We value every member of the healthcare team, but training and responsibility are not interchangeable. Physicians undergo far more supervised training and bear ultimate diagnostic and risk-management responsibility.

- Support **physician-led, team-based care** models that improve access and efficiency.
- Oppose **independent practice expansions** that compromise patient safety and accountability.
- Maintain **clear standards** so patients understand who is providing their care.

Patient Impact: When lines blur, patients assume equivalent training under different titles, which places safety and trust at risk.

2. Medical Malpractice Reform

Last session's "Free Kill" bill sought to expand medical malpractice liability but was vetoed due to the absence of damage caps.

PBCMS Position:

We support balanced reforms that ensure justice for injured patients while preventing runaway liability costs that drive physicians, especially those in high-risk specialties, out of practice.

- Preserve **predictable, fair standards** that stabilize malpractice premiums.
- Encourage **early resolution and transparency** to strengthen patient safety.

Patient Impact: Stable malpractice laws preserve access to physicians, especially in obstetrics, emergency medicine, and trauma care.

3. Corporate Practice of Medicine and Health System Stability

The recent collapse of Steward Health Care wasn't just a financial story, it hit home. Hospitals across Florida, including three in South Florida, were thrown into chaos. Patients lost access to care. Physicians and staff were left scrambling. All because private equity firms made risky financial moves with no accountability.

Florida is particularly vulnerable because it **has no prohibition on the corporate practice of medicine**. In many states, like Texas, California, Oregon, and Massachusetts, non-physicians cannot own or control medical practices. But in Florida, it's a free-for-all. Steward's collapse showed the consequences: they sold off hospital land and equipment, then charged massive rent for property they once owned. When the system failed, communities suffered.

PBCMS Position:

- Enact **corporate transparency and accountability laws** to prevent financial exploitation.
- Require **physician leadership** in clinical decision-making.
- Develop **contingency planning** to protect access when corporate entities collapse.

Patient Impact: Hospitals and practices are community assets. When they fail, care disappears.

4. Fair Workplace Environment: Due Process and Banning Non-Competes

Physicians should not face contract terms that restrict where they can work or silence patient advocacy. Non-compete clauses and denial of due process harm physicians and disrupt patient care.

- **PBCMS Position:**

PBCMS opposes post-contractual non-compete clauses in physician contracts. These provisions force physicians to leave their communities or stop practicing after termination.

- PBCMS supports strong physician due process rights. Physicians must have fair hearing protections before loss of hospital privileges or employment.
- PBCMS opposes contract terms that strip due process rights or override medical staff bylaws. These practices undermine physician autonomy and invite corporate interference in medical decisions.

Patient Impact: Non-compete clauses reduce access to care when physicians are forced to relocate or leave practice.

Lack of due process discourages physicians from advocating for patients in disputes with hospitals or corporate owners.

Protecting physician autonomy preserves continuity of care, strengthens patient trust, and ensures medical decisions remain based on patient need rather than business pressure.

5. Protecting Access to Care Through Increased Medicaid Reimbursement

Medicaid patients experience decreased access to physicians, as many do not take Medicaid due to poor reimbursement.

PBCMS Position:

- Support increasing physician reimbursement to the level of Medicare for all Medicaid patients to give more patients access to care.

Patient Impact: When care gaps occur, these delays increase ER visits, drive up costs, and worsen outcomes for entire communities.

6. Preserving Childhood Vaccine Requirements

Following the announcement by Florida's Surgeon General to eliminate all school-entry vaccine mandates, our society strongly reaffirms its support for **childhood immunization requirements** for public school attendance.

PBCMS Position:

- Vaccines are one of the most effective tools in modern medicine and remain essential to protecting children and communities from preventable disease.
- Maintain **school-entry vaccine requirements** as a cornerstone of public health.
- Uphold **science-based policy** that prevents outbreaks and protects vulnerable populations.

Patient Impact: Removing mandates risks eroding herd immunity, endangering children, families, and public health statewide.

7. Making Florida a Destination for Physicians

Florida faces a projected shortage of **18,000 physicians by 2035**; primary care alone will meet only **71% of statewide demand**. The Legislature has taken positive steps, such as expanding residency slots, offering loan repayment programs, and launching the **“Live Healthy” initiative**, but more must be done.

PBCMS Position:


- Continue investing in **GME expansion**, retention incentives, and licensure pathways.
- Foster an environment where **physicians want to live and practice** in Florida.

Patient Impact: A strong physician workforce ensures every Floridian, urban or rural, has timely access to care.

Together, We Can Strengthen Florida’s Health Care Future

We urge legislators to partner with the physician community to craft thoughtful, evidence-based policies that protect patients, preserve quality, and ensure the long-term health of our communities.

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 *Advocating for Physicians. Advancing Patient Care.*
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