



Advocacy | Education | Leadership | Collegiality | Member Perks

## Your Care is at Our Core

### Montana Medical Association Launches *Your Care is At Our Core* Advocacy Campaign

MMA President Ernest Gray, M.D. launched the *Your Care is At Our Core* Campaign in partnership with the American Medical Association (AMA) at the MMA Annual Meeting in September, highlighting the vital bond between patients and their physicians, which is truly the bedrock of healthcare.

**YOUR CARE IS  
AT OUR CORE**  
Montana's Physicians

The public campaign amplifies the message of the strong commitment of physicians to being their patients' biggest allies. Physicians know that prioritizing time with patients is crucial to making the best care decisions in what can be an especially vulnerable space for patients.

The facts are clear -- after all, physicians struggled through years of training, residency, fellowships, and long hours to connect with patients and help them in their journey to health, not fight against red tape. Learn more:

<https://www.mmaoffice.org/your-care-is-at-our-core/>

## Elections Held for 2025-2026 Board Officers

The Board of Trustees held an election of officers and trustees at the annual meeting on September 13, 2025. Shawna M. Yates, D.O., a Family Medicine and Hospice & Palliative Care Physician in Butte, took the reins as MMA President. Physicians elected or continuing to serve on the Executive Committee and Board include:

**Vice President:** Jason A. Cohen, M.D., Kalispell, Hospitalist, and Internal Medicine

**Secretary:** Cara J. Harrop, M.D., Polson, Family Medicine

**Treasurer & AMA Delegate (Alternate):** Michael P. Temporal, M.D., Billings, Family Medicine

**AMA Delegate:** Nicole C. Clark, M.D. Helena, Neurologist

**AMA Delegate to the Young Physicians Section:** Tyler J. Thorson, M.D., Kalispell, Family Medicine

**Immediate Past President:** Ernest (Joe) Gray, M.D., Browning, Family Medicine

Physicians elected to serve on the MMA Board of Trustees as a Member-at-Large are:

Anna Loge, M.D., Dillon, Internal Medicine

Cathy White, M.D., Butte, Pediatric Medicine

Wendy Grace, M.D., Butte, Family Medicine

[Full Press Release Here](#)

## Physicians, Legislators and Advocates Honored at MMA Annual Meeting

### [Dr. Jack McMahon Service to Montana Physicians Award](#)

Established by the Association to recognize physicians who have made important contributions to the advancement of the physician profession, this award is the **highest honor bestowed upon a Montana physician.**



**Brian Rah, M.D.**

The Doctor Jack McMahon Service to Montana Physicians Award was presented to **Dr. Brian Rah** at the MMA Annual Meeting for his efforts of the expansion of cardiovascular services in Montana. Working closely with cardiovascular surgery colleagues, Dr. Rah played a pivotal role in the launch a statewide mobile ECMO program, enabling life-saving interventions at hospitals that otherwise lacked this advanced capability.

[Read more B. Rah](#)

### [Award of Merit](#)

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**Kimberly Longcake, ANP**

[Read more K. Longcake](#)



**Sarah Morgan, M.D., Justin Cole, Esq, Jean Branscum**

[Read more MLC Team](#)

The prestigious Award of Merit was established by the Association in 1975 to recognize leaders who have demonstrated a commitment to service and dedication to patient care through their actions to improve health care in Montana. Four individuals were presented the award during the MMA Annual Meeting for their work to advance patient-centered health policy during the 2025 Legislative Session.

### **[Legacy of Leadership Award](#)**

Established to recognize and celebrate alumni of the MMA leadership program who, by inspiring change, have made long-lasting and outstanding contributions to advancing Montana's health system, recipients are selected by graduates of the program.



**Melody J. Cunningham, M.D.**

Melody Cunningham, M.D. was honored at the MMA Annual Meeting with *The Legacy of Leadership Award* for her dedication to bridging medicine and policymaking that continues to shape a healthier future for Montana. Doctor Cunningham is recognized for her authenticity, unwavering commitment to the health and well-being of Montanans, adherence to rigorous medical ethical standards, and her dedication to bipartisan collaboration in crafting solutions that are both effective and enduring.

[Read more M. Cunningham](#)

The Montana Medical Association Healthcare Excellence in Leadership Program brings physicians and health care professionals from across Montana together for five sessions to learn how they can lead, inspire, and influence real change. This in-depth course is designed to enhance the leadership skills of health care providers, so you can play a larger role in your practices and attain the knowledge and opportunities necessary to influence Montana health care policy. [Read More MMA HELP Program](#)

## **Legislators of Impact Award**



**Jonathan Karlen**

[Read more J. Karlen](#)



**Wendy McKamey**

[Read more W. McKamey](#)

The Legislator of Impact award was established by the Association in 2025 to recognize and celebrate Montana Legislators who's efforts achieve policy changes for the MMA's priorities.

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## **Gregory Honored for 50 Years of Practice**

### **Golden Stethoscope Award**

The Golden Stethoscope Award recognizes and celebrates the extraordinary contributions of physicians who have practiced medicine for 50 years.



**John R. Gregory, M.D.**

John R. Gregory, M.D., was presented the Golden Stethoscope Award in honor of his remarkable 50 years of dedication to the practice of medicine and service to patients across Montana. A distinguished thoracic surgeon, Dr. Gregory has touched thousands of lives over the past five decades, delivering compassionate, high-quality care while witnessing and contributing to the extraordinary evolution of medicine.

[Read more J. Gregory](#)

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## **Other Resolutions**

### **Opposition to Downcoding**

The MMA Board of Trustees calls upon Cigna Healthcare to rescind

### **Supporting Rural Healthcare Transformation**

A resolution passed by the MMA Board

the implementation of a new Evaluation and Management (E/M) Coding and Accuracy Policy (R49) that allows the insurer to unilaterally reduce E/M CPT® codes 99204–99205, 99214–99215, and 99244– 16 99245 to a lower level based solely on claim data and diagnosis codes.

[Full Resolution Here](#)

of Trustees sets priorities for use of Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) funds to ensure patients in rural and frontier Montana have continued access to healthcare locally as the state braces itself for decreased federal funding. The RHTP provides an unprecedented opportunity to invest in long-term workforce pipelines, clinical support systems, and innovative models of care; and evidence-based, team-based, and technology-enabled approaches to healthcare delivery can improve outcomes for patients while reducing duplication of services and unnecessary costs.

[Full Resolution Here](#)

## **AMA Board of Trustees votes to support the Center for Disease Control and Preventions, Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommendations**

At the September AMA Board of Trustees meeting, the Board voted to support the Center for Disease Control and Preventions, Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommendations made prior to May 1, 2025, as well as national medical specialty society recommendations on vaccines. While there are numerous AMA policies adopted by this House of Delegates (HOD) that support ACIP vaccine recommendations, the reality is that ACIP has changed dramatically since their adoption. This decision was necessary to ensure that the AMA can continue to communicate evidence-based vaccine recommendations to our members and their patients.

In keeping with policy G-600.071, the Board will bring forth a report to the 2025 Interim Meeting of the HOD that outlines the affected policies, which reference ACIP, with recommendations for amendment where appropriate for action by the HOD.

The actions as taken by the AMA to help maintain access to vaccines are outlined on the [AMA website](#).

## **Changes to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act: What**



## physicians need to know

AMA (9/12) (As the OBBBA was debated in the House and Senate, the AMA advocated against provisions that will severely cut funding for federal health programs and restrict access to health coverage. According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the OBBBA will increase the number of people without health insurance by 10 million in 2034. If the ACA's enhanced premium tax credits are not extended past the end of 2025, CBO estimates that the number of uninsured people will increase by more than 14 million in 2034.

[Read more](#)

## SPARC Act would address physician shortages in rural communities

AMA (9/12) On Sept. 3, the AMA sent a [letter](#) (PDF) of support for H.R. 4681, the "Specialty Physicians Advancing Rural Care Act." The SPARC Act would amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize a loan repayment program to encourage specialty medicine physicians to serve in rural communities experiencing a shortage of these vital physicians. The SPARC Act, a companion bill to S. 1380 (of the same name), was introduced on July 23, 2025, by Representatives John Joyce (R-PA) and Deborah Ross (D-NC). The AMA supported the Senate bill earlier this year.

Supporting this legislation is an important step for the AMA to try and help and address the expected physician shortage of about 86,000 physicians by 2036, with a potential shortage of 44,900 nonprimary care specialty physicians.

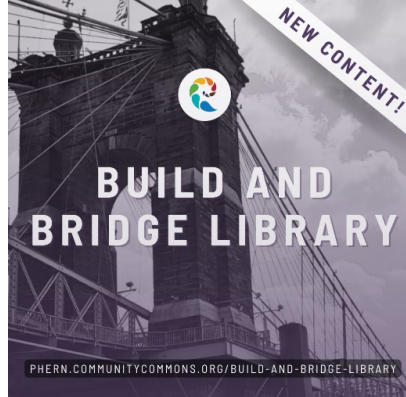
The AMA looks forward to working with the sponsors to see this legislation across the finish line this Congress.

## Governor Gianforte, DPHHS Announce Montana Submitted Application to Strengthen Medicaid Expansion Program

DPHHS (9/02) HELENA, Mont. – Governor Greg Gianforte and Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) Director Charlie Brereton today announced Montana submitted a proposed 1115 Medicaid Demonstration waiver application to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to strengthen the state's Medicaid expansion program.

The waiver, named the Health and Economic Livelihood Partnership (HELP) Demonstration, seeks to require community engagement and enhanced cost-sharing for working-age, able-bodied adults enrolled in the program. [Read more](#)

**Build and Bridge Library – Just Released!**



[phern.communitycommons.org](https://phern.communitycommons.org)

The Build and Bridge Library is LIVE!

Strong, lasting change happens when health departments and communities work side-by-side. The new **Build and Bridge Library** was created to support that work by bringing together practical tools, strategies, and examples that help community-based organizations and cross-sector allies collaborate more effectively. It's a space to learn, get inspired and find approaches that can be adapted to fit local needs.

The Library offers resources health departments and their partners can put into practice right away — whether you're launching a new partnership, strengthening existing connections, or sharing ideas with colleagues. Each piece is designed to spark collaboration and collective action, helping us bridge sectors and build stronger, healthier communities. **Explore the Library today and see how it can support your work.**

□ Explore and share: <https://phern.communitycommons.org/build-and-bridge-library/>

Created by the American Public Health Association and Community Commons with advisory support from experts and community champions in public health and non-governmental organizations.

## MEMBERSHIPS DUES & RENEWALS

### 2026 Membership: Renew Your MMA Membership

As the recognized voice of the medical profession in Montana for more than 147 years, the Montana Medical Association and local medical societies have represented Montana's physicians with a keen understanding of unique challenges facing our medical professionals. The ever-changing health care landscape is a reality and the Montana Medical Association is prepared to keep pace with those changing realities.

What we do together, no one physician can do alone. Your membership makes a difference in strengthening the physician's voice, shaping the changing health care landscape, and advancing ambitious clinical and educational initiatives that empowers physicians and positively impacts patient care and the practice of medicine in Montana.

Have an impact through your support of the MMA where the physician voice is unified, patient centered policies are amplified, and capacity can grow to advance medical science. You can easily join or renew now below, or call (406) 443-4000.

## Managing a complex mental health case? Let's talk.

Get free psychiatric consults for Montana clinicians treating pregnant/postpartum patients or youth 0-21.

Call 844-406-8725 for a consult.



## ADVOCACY REMINDERS

You can view our VoterVoice at any time to see what issues we are promoting at this [link](#).

If you wish to testify or help with advocacy efforts, please contact Jean Branscum at [jean@mmaoffice.org](mailto:jean@mmaoffice.org), and we can help coordinate.

Additionally, check out our Legislative Advocacy Training video taught by SetPoint Media founder Tara Jensen, which can be viewed [here](#) with your MMA login.

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

Date	Event	Location or where to find more information
October 11-12, 2025	<a href="#">2025/2026 Second Session</a>	Big Fork, MT
October 29, 2025	Celebration of Montana's Clean Air Champions and the 20th Anniversary of our Clean Indoor Air Act	Brothers Tapworks, 40 S. Last Chance Gulch, Helena, MT

If you would like your event listed, please email the name, date, and a way to find more information to [mma@mmaoffice.org](mailto:mma@mmaoffice.org).

**Reminder that *Know Your Dose* has Resources to Help Combat Substance Use Disorder**





# Toolkits Available



[www.knowyourdosemt.org](http://www.knowyourdosemt.org)

**HELP COMBAT OVERDOSES IN MONTANA**

## MMA Member Perks

### ON-DEMAND VIRTUAL DEA MATE ACT Requirements Course



*Comprehensive DEA-  
Compliant CME/CE Course*

**IS YOUR DEA  
CERTIFICATE UP  
FOR RENEWAL?**



**Complete Mandatory Renewal  
Requirements in 1 Day!**

Don't forget that Montana Medical Association members can receive a discount

on training requirements under the MATE ACT regulations. Members can register for on-demand online courses or live webinars [here](#). Be sure to use discount codes to save \$100 at checkout for either on-demand online courses (code: MMAWEB100) or live online courses (code: MMA100).

## 30% Member Discount on Online Training!

[Click Here for more information](#)

### Telehealth, Secure Messaging, and More

Backline is an award-winning secure messaging and clinical communication platform that connects all of the stakeholders in a patient's journey.

Connect with patients in virtual visits and share information between your staff, family members, caretakers, and outside providers in real-time—all in a convenient, HIPAA-compliant solution.

Keep your patients engaged and your team in sync with Backline.

**We  
Endorse  
Telehealth**  
for Our Members



[Register Today!](#)



### **FREE** PRESCRIPTION DISCOUNT DRUG CARD



**CLICK HERE**  
*to get your FREE card!*

### Montana Rx Card

This program is being provided to you to distribute to your patients to help lower their prescription drug costs. Simply distribute the FREE Prescription Drug Card below and your patients can save up to 75% (discounts average roughly 30%) at more than 68,000 national and regional pharmacies. This card can be used as a primary plan and/or it can be used on prescriptions not covered by other plans. This program also includes other value-added programs, which will be listed on the card. This card is pre-activated and can be used immediately.

## Follow Us On Social Media!

Stay up to date with Association events and initiatives by following us on

[Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)!

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