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Dr. Melody Cunningham Receives 2025 Montana Medical Association Legacy of Leadership Award

Missoula Physician Recognized for Important Healthcare Contributions

Helena, MT – The Montana Medical Association (MMA) proudly announces that **Melody Cunningham, M.D., of Missoula**, has been named the **2025 recipient of the Montana Medical Association Legacy of Leadership Award**. The honor was presented during the 147th MMA Annual Meeting on September 12, 2025, recognizing Dr. Cunningham’s exceptional leadership, enduring advocacy, and unwavering commitment to advancing health care in Montana.

The **MMA Legacy of Leadership Award** is among the Association’s highest honors, celebrating physicians who have demonstrated visionary leadership that strengthens the medical profession and improves the health of communities across the state.

“Dr. Cunningham is recognized for her enduring and transformative contributions as a visionary leader, whose steadfast commitment to the long-term health and well-being of Montanans has shaped public policy through effective advocacy and the cultivation of authentic, impactful relationships,” said Ernest Gray, M.D., MMA President, during the award presentation.

Dr. Cunningham has exemplified how physicians can lead beyond the clinic. As a newly elected member of the Montana House of Representatives, she served as a trusted and credible voice on health policy, offering scientific expertise and thoughtful solutions on issues critical to Montana’s families and communities. Her legislative work championed access to care, public safety, and preventive health.

Among her legislative achievements, Dr. Cunningham introduced innovative legislation to reduce respiratory-related morbidity and mortality by authorizing Montana schools to stock albuterol inhalers and administer them during respiratory emergencies. This life-saving policy ensures that children experiencing respiratory distress—such as asthma attacks—can receive immediate treatment, bridging a crucial gap in school health safety.

Dr. Cunningham also continues to be a strong advocate for public health education, advancing policies to mitigate the risks associated with marijuana use. Her legislation to require the display of educational warnings at points of sale for both recreational and medical marijuana underscores her commitment to prevention and informed decision-making.

Her leadership represents the very essence of the MMA's mission to promote excellence in medicine and the health of all Montanans. Through both her clinical work and public service, Dr. Cunningham has shown that physician leadership is vital to shaping sound policy, protecting patient welfare, and ensuring a healthier future for all.

"Leadership in medicine extends beyond patient care—it means standing up for policies that safeguard our communities," stated Jean Branscum, CEO. "Dr. Cunningham exemplifies the power of physician leadership to turn knowledge into action and compassion into systemic change."

The Montana Medical Association congratulates Dr. Cunningham for her outstanding service and contributions to health policy and leadership in Montana.

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