

## Leadership and Advocacy Summit Reflection

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Every spring, Physician Assistants (PA) and PA students gather at the Leadership and Advocacy Summit (LAS) to advocate for the progression of professional autonomy and patient care on Capitol Hill. This year, passionate individuals invested in the PA profession met with Congressmen and their staff regarding the following two bills: The Physician Assistant Direct Payment Act, S. 596/HR 1052 and Promoting Access to Diabetic Shoes Act, S. 237/HR 808. The Physician Assistant Direct Payment Act allows PAs to receive direct payment from Medicare vs the involvement of a third-party, which helps to eliminate one more administrative burden for medical groups/facilities. The Promoting Access to Diabetic Shoes Act will allow for PAs to write prescriptions for diabetic shoes through Medicare. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to discuss these bills with the staff of our Ohio Legislators!

As a student, this was an invaluable first experience regarding professional advocacy at the federal level. Advocacy leaders within our national organization and state chapter, AAPA and OAPA, spent a considerable amount of time equipping us students with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead several meetings with the Congress Staff. It can be so easy to have tunnel vision when in school, but this opportunity opened my eyes to the importance of exercising our voices as student advocates. There was a constant buzz of professional pride and passion throughout the conference, and it was easy to see why these leaders come back on a yearly basis to advocate on The Hill.

In addition to spreading the message about these two bills, we were able to network with students from other programs and practicing PAs. We found ourselves bouncing ideas off of each other throughout the conference to promote upcoming leadership positions, to improve state events (conferences, mixers, fundraisers, etc), to gain insight to the job search crunch, and even to share “making it through PA school” advice. We made numerous friends with students from other states who we hope to see again in upcoming conferences!

Overall, this was an incredible experience that I recommend to all students. It allowed us to be a part of a message that goes beyond our individual selves, programs, and even states. Students have a seat at the advocacy table, and it is important that we continue to strengthen and recruit more voices!