



# 2023 IMA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The Idaho Medical Association is the leading organization representing physicians in all specialties, practice settings and geographic locations in our state, and is recognized as the voice of medicine in Idaho. IMA's mission is to unify and advocate for all Idaho physicians, promote the art and science of medicine, and remain dedicated to improving the health and well-being of all Idahoans.

IMA represents over 3,700 Idaho physicians and other providers on a variety of complex legislative and regulatory issues that impact Idaho physicians and their patients.

If you have comments or questions on any of these issues, please contact IMA lobby team members:

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## Idaho Patient Act – Thank You

IMA sincerely thanks the Idaho Legislature for approving amendments to the Idaho Patient Act (IPACT) in the 2022 session. HB 778 updated provisions of IPACT to greatly reduce administrative burdens and costs for medical providers, while maintaining important patient protections. The law now strikes a good balance of ensuring patients are appropriately informed about the costs of healthcare services, and physicians can provide notifications without undue cost and regulation.

## Expanding Graduate Medical Education (GME): More Physicians Throughout Idaho

IMA supports funding for the 6th year of the Idaho State Board of Education's Ten-Year Graduate Medical Education Expansion Plan. IMA is strongly committed to growing our physician workforce, especially in rural and underserved parts of Idaho, to increase access to care, meet the demands of a fast-growing population, and produce the next generation of caregivers in Idaho's aging physician workforce.

GME, also known as residency training, is the last step in the physician training pipeline, after medical school and before establishing a medical practice. The residency phase of training establishes the physician's specialty, such as Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Psychiatry, etc.

For 2023, the Idaho State Board of Education and Idaho residency programs will seek \$1.4M in new funding for the 6th year of the GME expansion. This funding will expand residency positions by another 14 slots across Idaho, plus incrementally increase the base funding level for existing programs. In addition to the specialties listed above, this year's request includes a new Pediatrics residency program.

## Ensuring Access to Women's Healthcare

IMA supports Idaho laws that ensure access to healthcare for women, especially those experiencing pregnancy complications. Idaho physicians want to be able to provide standard of care treatments in these situations to protect the lives, health, and fertility of Idaho women.

Idaho's trigger laws now make all elective abortions illegal in our state. IMA understands this is the intended outcome of the Legislature's actions and is settled policy.

## **Ensuring Access to Women's Healthcare -- *continued***

However, the language in the statutes also outlaws some medically necessary treatments for pregnancy complications in women who want to have children. It is IMA's understanding that this is not the outcome the Legislature intended but has since become an unintended consequence.

### Care for Pregnancy Complications

IMA supports changes to Idaho's abortion laws to make it legal for physicians to provide standard of care, evidence-based treatments for women whose life or health may be endangered by the following pregnancy complications, among others:

- Ectopic or molar pregnancies
- Incomplete miscarriages
- Premature rupture of membranes
- Maternal diagnoses of cancer, preeclampsia, heart failure, or other serious medical conditions
- Lethal fetal diagnoses inconsistent with life outside the womb

### Patient Safety and Access to Care

The current situation is impacting access to healthcare for women, which will likely cause Idaho's maternal mortality rates to worsen. Right now, Idaho women with pregnancy complications are experiencing lack of care or delays in care that endangers their lives, health, and future ability to have children. These are women who want to begin or grow their family but have received a devastating diagnosis.

### Troubling Legal Provisions

Idaho's abortion laws have conflicting provisions and inconsistent terminology that create confusion and fear among physicians who take care of patients with pregnancy complications. This lack of clarity is compounded by two major components of Idaho's laws:

1. The law constructs "exceptions" to the abortion ban (life of the mother, rape & incest) as affirmative defenses physicians can use in court to defend themselves after they have been charged with a crime. This puts the burden of proof on physicians and takes away the normal legal precedent of innocence until proven guilty.
2. Physicians who follow the standard of care for treating pregnancy complications may be subject to criminal, civil and licensure sanctions. This triple threat of punitive action is creating reluctance to treat patients whose care may or may not be interpreted as legal by officials with no medical training.

IMA is committed to working with the Legislature to remedy the unintended consequences for Idaho families facing pregnancy complications, and we strongly support changes to the legal provisions of the law that negatively impact patient access to care.

## **Physician Wellbeing & Impacts on Workforce**

### Physician Burnout

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, physician burnout was recognized as a public health crisis in the U.S. While there is not an instant solution, IMA is committed to supporting the well-being of Idaho physicians. Currently, physician wellness programs aid struggling physicians. Expanding these programs and taking steps to ensure physicians feel comfortable seeking help are critical factors to combating physician burnout.

### Threats and Harassment

Healthcare providers and public health officials have become the recent targets of 'doxing' (the public release of personal information with the intent to harass and intimidate). This tactic directly threatens the emotional and physical safety of both healthcare employees and their families. Doxing is unnecessarily contributing to the burnout of healthcare workers in Idaho.

IMA is committed to support any effort that will outlaw the publication of personal information when done with the intent to harass, intimidate, or harm healthcare workers and their families. IMA will also support efforts to limit public protests at healthcare employees' private residences.