

Dear Virginia Psychiatrist:

Thank you for your membership and your support of the Psychiatric Society of Virginia (PSV) and our advocacy efforts. We are fortunate to have volunteers and staff to **help PSV General Assembly** about patient care, insurance parity, professional standards, and other issues important to medicine in general and psychiatry specifically.

Over the past 12 months we have seen more activity in mental health policy than we have in the previous 10 years. The Governor, General Assembly, and the public have been focused on changes to commitment laws, mental health system funding, access to treatment, and society's perception about the mentally ill. ***More than ever before, psychiatrists are engaged in the public policy debate.*** Because of the vast number and sometimes divergent interests of stakeholders, PSV diligently pushes to be influential in this process.

During the 2016 session of the General Assembly we defeated a measure to begin the closure of two of the state's geriatric psychiatric hospitals, successfully worked to establish Virginia's first ever substance use disorder benefit in Medicaid, began the process of reforming the step therapy (or fail first) protocols used by insurance companies, and sought to remove mental health facilities from the Certificate of Public Need (COPN) process.

The 2017 General Assembly session will bring fresh challenges and opportunities. PSV is a leading voice in the effort to expand tele-psychiatry and reform our mental health system. Both will be issues during the next session. We will be actively engaged in these as well as our continuing efforts regarding step therapy reform.

These advocacy and outreach efforts require us to ***engage in the political process.*** We support candidates who support the highest standards of professionalism and an environment that fosters the physician-patient relationship. **PSYCHMD-PAC, our political action committee, is our vehicle.**

Psychiatrists must increase our participation in politics to advance our profession and support our patients. Please join us in making a contribution to PSYCHMD-PAC. Thank you in advance for your support.