



AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION

TREATING OUR FAMILY AND YOURS



MINNESOTA OSTEOPATHIC  
MEDICAL SOCIETY

*D.O.S: PHYSICIANS TREATING PEOPLE, NOT JUST SYMPTOMS*

TO: Members of the Minnesota Senate Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: American Osteopathic Association  
Minnesota Osteopathic Medical Society

DATE: March 6, 2024

**SUBJECT: SUPPORT for S.F.3531**

**The American Osteopathic Association (AOA) and the Minnesota Osteopathic Medical Society (MOMS) are writing in support of MN S.F.3531, which enacts various policies aimed at supporting physician wellness and addressing burnout, to the benefit of the state's physicians as well as the patients whom they serve.**

The AOA represents more than 186,000 osteopathic physicians (DOs) and medical students (OMs) nationwide. The AOA promotes public health, encourages scientific research, serves as the primary certifying body for DOs and is the accrediting agency for osteopathic medical schools. The MOMS is a professional medical organization that represents over 1,500 DOs providing patient care in Minnesota.

Research shows that depression and burnout is higher among members of the medical community than among the general public, and it has only grown over time:

- In 2021, **62.8%** of physicians reported experiencing one or more symptoms of burnout, compared to 45.5% in 2011.<sup>1</sup>
- OMs, interns and residents report experiencing burnout at similar rates (**54%**).<sup>2</sup>
- In addition, members of the medical community are more likely to die by suicide than the general public, at approximately **twice the rate**.<sup>3</sup>

Despite these alarming statistics, in 2023, **four in ten physicians** reported that they avoided seeking help for burnout or depression over concerns that their treatment could be disclosed to employers or state licensing boards and negatively impact their careers.<sup>4</sup>

In response to this crisis, the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) issued recommendations calling for the elimination of intrusive questions about a physician's mental or behavioral health history on licensing or hospital/health plan credentialing applications, instead focusing only on *current* impairments that would adversely affect the physician's ability to safely care for patients.<sup>5</sup> The FSMB also supports physician wellness programs, which allow physicians to obtain confidential treatment without risking disciplinary action from their licensing board, as long as they remain in compliance with their treatment program.

<sup>1</sup> See <https://nam.edu/burnout-among-health-care-professionals-a-call-to-explore-and-address-this-underrecognized-threat-to-safe-high-quality-care/>

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9964633/>

<sup>3</sup> See [https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/896257#vp\\_1?form=fpf](https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/896257#vp_1?form=fpf)

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/994163>

<sup>5</sup> See <https://www.fsmb.org/siteassets/advocacy/policies/policy-on-wellness-and-burnout.pdf>

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As of 2023, 26 state medical boards (including Minnesota's) audited and changed the intrusive language from their licensure applications. S.F. 3531 will help to further promote physician well-being in Minnesota by making similar changes to health plan credentialing requirements, as well as supporting physician wellness programs, and enacting several other pro-physician policies to address this issue.

Specifically, the bill stipulates that:

1. Health plan applications for provider credentialing must not require providers to disclose past health conditions.
2. Providers are not required to disclose current health conditions if they are being treated in a manner that does not affect their ability to practice medicine.
3. Disclosure of any health conditions that would not impair the provider's capacity to practice medicine in a competent, safe, and ethical manner is not required.

It further:

4. Enacts policies to support state physician wellness programs; and
5. Appropriates funding to reduce the stigma around mental health treatment among health care workers and reward workplaces that prioritize clinician well-being.

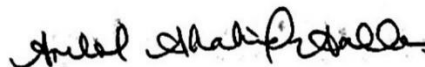
The AOA and MOMS strongly support policies that balance the need for physician wellness with patient safety, and ultimately result in a stronger, more resilient healthcare workforce. For these reasons, we urge you to **support MN S.F. 3531**.

Should you need any additional information, please contact Bre Schmidt, MPH, Associate Director of State Government Affairs at [bschmidt@osteopathic.org](mailto:bschmidt@osteopathic.org).

Sincerely,



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President, AOA



Sonbol Shahid-Salles, DO  
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