



LEADERSHIP DAY 2024 ESSAYS

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ACP Leadership Day 2024.

Growing up as the eldest of 7 children to immigrant parents, it was inevitable that I inherit a leadership role early on. Though, I was first exposed to servant leadership in college during which I participated in the Luckyday scholarship program. The program taught me the true meaning of leadership and gave me a guidebook of sorts. From then on, the concept permeated throughout everything I did, whether that was leading my siblings through puberty and a tumultuous home life or leading my dorm hall as a resident assistant.

Life is interesting in ways that cannot be explained. Everything happens for a reason and looking back at where I started and where I am now, I understand that this life plan was organized divinely. After struggling through college and medical school over 8 years, I felt less connected to society than ever. It was not until my clinical rotations and residency that I began to feel inexplicable emotions towards the healthcare system and its effects on the patients I was caring for. It broke my heart to see patients decline treatment because of financial constraints or those who presented with progressed chronic disease because of lack of access. I understand that I have a duty to advocate for patients at every level.

ACP Leadership day brought me back to those years spent delving into servant leadership. It reminded me that I have an obligation to put my power into action. During the 2 days on Capitol Hill, I was exposed to both levels of congressional hierarchy in our country and their role in the healthcare system. Most importantly, this day clarified my role in our healthcare system as an advocate for those who need it the most. Medicine is a niche specialty and only those who practice it really understand its intricacies. Leadership day was a humbling experience as we went around speaking to congressional staff members about our needs for better patient care and seeking their support on bills that could do just that. I realized the needs in our medical community is otherwise lost amongst the slew of other issues in this nation if there are no voices to advocate for them. This experience has shifted my perspective on patient care. Although I can continue to improve on my medical care for everyone, I can now also expand my efforts in making meaningful change through policy. This has created a core memory for me. I am inspired more than ever to be more attentive and actionable on policy creations and changes that affect patient care and my role and power in that realm. For me, this is the definition of meaningful change in medicine.

Wisam Beauti, MD
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ACP LEADERSHIP DAY 2024

Participating in Advocacy Day 2024 has been an enriching experience that has profoundly shaped my understanding of the intersection between healthcare and public policy. Reflecting on my journey, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to engage with fellow healthcare professionals, policymakers, and advocates who are equally passionate about improving patient care and outcomes.

One of the most significant lessons I have learned is the immense power of collaboration. The event highlighted the critical role that policymakers play in shaping the healthcare landscape and underscored the necessity for healthcare providers to be actively involved in policy discussions. Witnessing firsthand the dedication of policymakers to understanding and addressing the barriers to healthcare access was inspiring, and reinforced my belief that effective healthcare reform requires a collaborative effort between those who design policies and those who implement them into practice.

Additionally, the discussions and workshops emphasized the importance of advocacy. As physicians (or physicians-in-training, in my case), we are often focused on the immediate needs of our patients, but this experience has taught me that advocating for systemic change is equally crucial. By engaging with policymakers and sharing our clinical experiences, we can help shape policies that address the root causes of healthcare disparities. I am now more committed than ever to using my voice and experiences to advocate for policies that promote equitable access to care.

In conclusion, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to participate in Advocacy Day on behalf of the American College of Physicians. It has broadened my understanding of the critical role of public policy in healthcare and strengthened my resolve to advocate for meaningful change. I am inspired by the collective efforts of my peers and policymakers and am excited to continue this journey of advocacy and collaboration towards improving the health and wellbeing of all Americans.

Ben Dreskin
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ACP LEADERSHIP DAY 2024

“From the time you wake up in the morning until you go to bed at night, every single thing that you see or touch, from your clothing to your breakfast cereal to the car you drive, everything has a lobbying group or trade association vying for your legislator’s attention.” At ACP Leadership Day, over 480 medical students, residents, fellows and attending physicians traveled to Washington DC to share our stories that bring policy issues to life.

This year, we were advocating for three policies:

1. **The Safe Step Act of 2023 (HR 2630 / S 652):** This act would require group health plans to provide an exception process for any medication step therapy protocol. My colleague shared a powerful story to illustrate the importance of this act. A single mom of three kids had her Crohn's disease controlled for many years with a biologic drug. She moved to a new state, which meant switching to a new health insurance carrier. The new insurance carrier required her to “fail first” all over again, switching her back to cheaper and less effective Crohn's disease drugs and landing her back in the hospital. This story underscores why it is critical for group health plans to provide an exception process for any medication step therapy protocol.
2. **The Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2023 (HR 2389 / S 1302):** This act seeks to increase the number of Medicare-supported Graduate Medical Education (GME) positions by 2,000 per year for seven years. Given the current and projected shortages of physicians in various specialties, increasing the number of residency positions is essential to ensuring that the healthcare system can meet the growing demand for medical services.
3. **The Physician Fee Schedule Update and Improvements Act (HR 6545):** This act would raise the threshold for implementing budget-neutral payment cuts from \$20 million to \$53 million and provide an increased update to the threshold every five years based on the Medicare Economic Index (MEI). This policy aims to address the financial pressures faced by physicians and ensure that they can continue to provide high-quality care without being hindered by inadequate reimbursement rates.

ACP Leadership Day was a transformative experience for me. It underscored the importance of looking beyond immediate, clinical solutions to address systemic issues through policy advocacy. The knowledge and skills I gained will undoubtedly shape my future career in medicine, as I strive to not only treat patients but also to advocate for a healthcare system that works better for everyone.

Emma Kundracik, PhD
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Leadership Day 2024

Leadership Day is an incredible opportunity for current and future physicians, with varying degrees of experience in advocacy, to come together to mentor and learn from one another—all while fighting for a better future for patients and the medical community. Though passionate about advocacy, I didn't begin to gain experience in the field until I was a first-year medical student nearly two years ago. Leadership Day has allowed me to build on the modest experience that I already had, such as working with local city legislators, through learning how to work with those of the House and Senate representing Ohio.

The first day of Leadership Day was focused on providing further background on advocacy, explaining the logistics of how we would meet with the staff of legislators, in addition to education on this year's policy priorities—advocating passage of the Safe Steps Act, Resident Physician Shortage Reduction act of 2023, and Physician Fee Schedule Updates and Improvements Act. Additionally, the first day provided the opportunity to network and meet others who are passionate about advocacy, particularly those that I would be working with to convey our policy priorities to legislators on the second day.

On the second day, I walked alongside many fantastic medical students, residents, and attending physicians down to Capitol Hill, representing the patients and IM physicians throughout Ohio. This hands-on portion of Leadership Day left the greatest impression and taught me numerous useful advocacy skills. I felt well-equipped to engage with legislators and their staff and many important principles were reinforced. For example, the benefit of forming a personal connection with legislators and the importance of following up with those we met with in one way or another—the experienced advocates that I was able to work with often extended an invitation for legislators to visit their respective institutions, such as a medical school or health system campus and encouraged them to feel free to use them as a resource in the future to gain further knowledge on a given topic. Additionally, the importance of understanding the political feasibility of the legislation we were advocating for and conveying bipartisanship to legislators to help catalyze support was also emphasized—one of the physicians I worked with always had the number of supporting democrats and republicans in the House and Senate on hand and named specific co-sponsoring allies of the congressperson that we were speaking with regarding a given bill.

Leadership Day was ultimately a rewarding experience that allowed me to not only improve my advocacy skillset but also emphasized the feasibility of incorporating advocacy into my career, as so many of the attending and resident physicians I worked with had done. Additionally, the fellow advocates I was able to meet throughout those two days made it a highly rewarding experience that I won't soon forget.

Brandon Petrovich MS, RD, LD
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M.D. Class of 2026

ACP LEADERSHIP DAY 2024

Prior to ACP Leadership Day, I had minimal advocacy experience. I was not familiar with the process to advocate for a bill and the types of conversations to expect on Capitol Hill. The opportunity to advocate for ACP's priorities was very exciting to me, yet I was anxious about my lack of experience.

The nerves faded as we were trained on meeting with Congress representatives and briefed on key information from the bills we would be advocating for. ACP presenters emphasized the importance of telling stories rather than focusing solely on numbers and facts. As I listened, patient encounters from my third-year rotations came to mind; challenging situations that could benefit from the bills being passed.

Working with the ACP Ohio Chapter was a highlight of the experience. During our preparatory meetings for Capitol Hill, we gathered tips from our chapter leaders previously involved in Leadership Day. We also organized and framed our agenda for our meetings with Congress representatives, which member of the group would introduce the bill, who would tell a story relating to the bill, and who would follow up and thank the representative. As we worked together, the energy, enthusiasm, and support from chapter leaders, physicians, and medical students alike was inspiring. Everyone had a role in the discussions we would have with the representatives the next day.

The day of the meetings on Capitol Hill was very busy, and incredibly fulfilling. As my group visited congressional offices, it was encouraging to see legislative assistants take interest in the bills we were advocating for, especially when we shared our own personal experiences. By the end of the day, we felt that we communicated our message effectively. It was so rewarding to work together as a team to advocate for important issues in healthcare.

I returned to Ohio inspired and grateful for the opportunity to attend Leadership Day with the Ohio Chapter. The experience allowed me to connect and learn from exceptional physicians and medical students while learning foundational skills in advocacy. I am excited to continue to be involved with advocacy in the future as well as the ACP Ohio Chapter.

Charlotte Purnode
OMS-IV, OU-HCOM

ACP LEADERSHIP DAY 2024

"Few will have the greatness to bend history; but each of us can work to change a small portion of the events, and in the total of all these acts will be written the history of this generation."

This quote from Senator Robert F. Kennedy's Day of Affirmation Address to the University of Cape Town in 1966 demonstrates what we've always known- individual stories and participation in the body politic matters. Fast forward nearly six decades and that sentiment is now more relevant than ever, especially for those of us privileged to take care of patients.

I have always thought that if I didn't pursue a career in medicine, then I would have pursued a career in politics. As my training has progressed, I've realized that the two are not mutually exclusive. At the intersection of medicine and politics is advocacy. While in the clinic and hospital space we have the ability to intervene on individual patient's lives, the policy space allows us to advocate for legislation that can have a meaningful and measurable impact on many patients' lives. Physicians play an important role in offering our expertise on health care and patient-related policies because we see the profound impacts well-designed legislation can have. We also see the harm and heartache caused by failure to act or the consequences of enacting bad policies. In either case, patient stories and experiences serve as a call to action for us to advocate for our patients. ACP's Leadership Day is an exciting introduction to the world of advocacy for trainees across the spectrum. It offers us the opportunity to enter into the arena to share the stories of our patients with elected officials in an effort to move the needle and advocate for policies that align with the mission of improving care.

Patient care is the guiding light that directs every professional decision we make as physicians. It is the privilege of a lifetime to be in a profession that offers us this opportunity, and Leadership Day enables us to take that mission from the clinic to Capitol Hill. In an era that is increasingly defined by partisanship and political tribalism, finding common ground and partners on how to best care for the American people is of the utmost importance. In short, ACP Leadership Day creates a bridge between the 161,000 ACP members, our elected officials and most importantly- our patients.

Nathan Reynolds, DO, MPH

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ACP Leadership Day 2024.

ACP's Leadership Day was the coolest experience I have had in medicine! I have always felt strongly about issues of justice in general, and as a resident I focus on issues that affect my patients and people in my community. Unfortunately, I often feel helpless in addressing them because of the society in which we live. This has made practicing medicine unsatisfying at times as I cannot always help my patients to be well. Leadership day helped address my burnout by re-aligning my passion for addressing the root causes of these issues with my work! It was inspiring to meet attendings, residents, and medical students who have similar passions. I do not like to "network", but by being with a group of energized, like-minded individuals, getting to know each other was easy and fun. I even made a few friends!

This was my first leadership day, so I was most nervous for the meetings with leaders and staff. ACP created tip sheets with all the information I needed to know about the issues for which we were advocating. On the day of our meetings, I realized that I did not need to know much detail about the bills anyway and I only had to be an expert on my patients! My role at leadership day was to teach the representatives and their staff about how the policies they create affect my job and my patients by sharing stories. The staff seemed moved by our stories, even in offices that I did not expect to be supportive of the issues we were advocating for. I also learned that part of meeting with representatives is to connect with them to serve as a resource for them in the future. As a resident and young person, I rarely feel like I have authority, but I am an expert in my patients and my experience which is valuable! As a result of leadership day, I feel much more confident being involved in my local government. I now know that I can reach out to my representatives and offer my opinion, my experience, and my stories to help inform their opinion of issues that come up in my district. I hope that I can build a relationship with my representatives in the future which is not something I would have even dreamed of before participating in leadership day.

Being in the House and Senate offices was awe-inspiring (riding the Senate tram was also a highlight)! I felt like I was part of history, and I was contributing to a more positive future. Thinking about how proud and happy my patients would be if they knew I went to Washington D.C. to advocate for issues that matter to them is something that still brings tears to my eyes. This experience was so meaningful to me. At the end of the day, my new friends and I took a trip to the gift shops and started brainstorming what we will do at leadership day next year!

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ACP Leadership Day 2024.

My time on Capitol Hill for the 2024 ACP Leadership Day reflects what it means to be a physician in today's America. While maintaining an intimate connection to the local communities we serve is integral to ensuring high-quality patient care, the days where physicians need only worry about grassroots efforts and door-to-door awareness campaigns are dwindling. Moreover, the rapidly changing healthcare system in this country requires physicians to understand, and voice within, state and national policy making. This is not only to ensure that the best interests for our patients are being defended broadly, but to also expand the ability of our profession to act in their best interests at home.

My brief glimpse into the legislative pandemonium in our nation's capital surprised me, and in a good way. We were able to drown out the nonsense of political division during this election year and simply speak to people who wanted to listen. My group was fortunate in that seemingly everyone we spoke to was invested in our cause to support the three pieces of bipartisan legislation. After all, many of the individuals we spoke to were either from the communities we were representing or had family members who lived within them. In a strange dichotomy, the people we elected to represent us were being represented by us during our visit. We were, in essence, talking to our patients.

As a soon-to-be first-generation physician, this experience, and the meaning that I derived from it will stick with me throughout my career as I pursue additional opportunities to similarly represent my patients and my peers beyond just my institution.

Dean Watkins

M.D. Candidate | Class of 2025