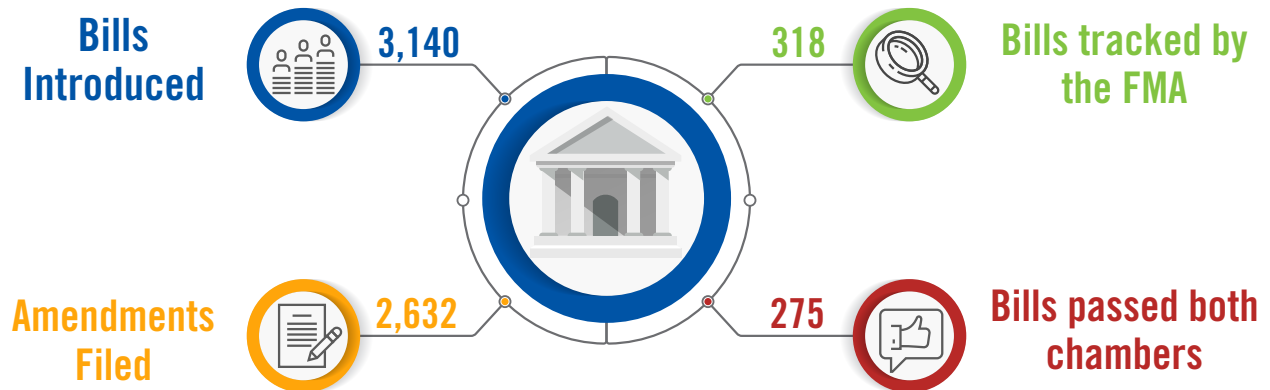




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Total bill activity of the 2021 Regular Session of the Florida Legislature

It's a good question. How does the FMA help you practice medicine?

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At the FMA, we are often asked how we carry out our mission of Helping Physicians Practice Medicine when it comes to the legislative process. The truth is, while Florida's legislative session lasts just 60 days, the FMA works year-round with lawmakers, specialty societies, county medical societies, and our governmental affairs team to make sure we are prepared to defend physicians and advance the practice of good medicine.

Our goal is to execute a strategy that ensures a positive outcome for medicine. Years of work on a single issue often culminates with a 60-day battle to protect physicians and patients from harmful legislation – meaning any bill that would hurt Florida-licensed physicians if passed and signed into law.

Below are eight bad bills the FMA defeated this year to help you practice medicine.

1. APRN Specialty Practice

The FMA defeated HB 111, which would have allowed APRNs and CRNAs to advertise and practice as medical specialists – dermatologists, cardiologists, anesthesiologists, etc. – without *any* physician supervision.

2. NICA Amendments

The FMA succeeded in removing amendments to SB 1786 – legislation reforming the Neurological Injury Compensation Association (NICA) program – which would have increased the number of medical liability lawsuits that could be brought against physicians and forced most doctors to pay a higher annual NICA assessment.





3. Wrongful Death

When Florida's wrongful death statute was expanded in 1990, the Legislature specifically exempted medical malpractice cases given the extreme volatility in professional liability insurance costs. The FMA successfully fought attempts to remove this exemption (HB 651 and SB 1112), protecting physicians from certain increases in lawsuits and insurance premiums.

4. Optometrist Laser Surgery

Optometrists continued a relentless effort to expand their scope of practice through legislation (HB 631 and SB 876) that would have allowed them to perform certain laser and non-laser ophthalmic surgeries approved by the Board of Optometry. Though both bills passed one committee each, the FMA stopped them from advancing further.

5. Psychologist Prescribing

For the third year in a row, psychologists sought full prescriptive authority – controlled substances included – for all patients, regardless of age. Thanks to the FMA working in consultation with the Florida Psychiatric Society, this legislation (HB 687 and SB 160) was never heard in committee.

6. PA Autonomous Practice

The physician assistant association was confident lawmakers would finally pass legislation (HB 431 and SB 894) allowing PAs to practice medicine without physician supervision. Thanks to FMA leadership and the assistance of multiple medical specialties, the autonomous practice provision was deleted. While the product allows PAs to engage in additional tasks, it ensures that they will continue practicing under physician supervision.

7. Limitation in Medical Payments

For the last seven years, business groups have sought to curb their liability for injuries caused by their negligence by artificially limiting the amount of payment physicians can receive for treating these injured patients. HB 561 and SB 846 would have limited physician payments to amounts customarily accepted, taking into consideration those paid by Medicare, Workers' Compensation, and private health insurance companies. The FMA ensured that neither bill received a committee hearing.

8. Pharmacist Independent Vaccination Authority

Current law requires pharmacists who administer vaccines in Florida to do so under a written protocol with a supervising physician. Having agreed to this condition just a few years ago, pharmacists backed legislation (HB 1063 and SB 898) to remove the physician supervision requirement. However, the FMA successfully intervened to preserve it.

While these victories are significant, the FMA's physician advocacy is an ongoing process. Committee weeks for the 2022 Legislative Session will begin in just a few months. There will be new challenges, and many of the issues outlined above will resurface. Rest assured that the FMA will be prepared and engaged on your behalf — to prevent bad bills from becoming bad policy, and to make Florida a better place for you to practice the art and science of medicine.

