

REPORT OF THE PHYSICIAN WELLNESS COMMITTEE

May 17, 2025

TO: HOUSE OF DELEGATES
TENNESSEE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

SUBMITTED BY: EDWARD CAPPARELLI, MD, CHAIR

The Physician Wellness Committee was formed at the 2023 Tennessee Medical Association (TMA) House of Delegates meeting via Resolution 02-23. The purpose of the Committee is to remove the stigma of mental illness so physicians are encouraged to seek help before they reach a crisis. A secondary goal is to identify programs and processes that promote wellness for both urban and rural physicians.

Since its establishment, the Committee has met quarterly to evaluate opportunities to improve access to mental health support statewide. Such activities include:

- compiling a list of wellness-related questions hospital systems can use on employment applications in lieu of current stigmatizing questionnaires;
- promoting the Tennessee Medical Foundation's physician screening questionnaire in both TMA and specialty societies;
- assessing the feasibility of establishing a statewide hotline managed by the Tennessee Psychiatric Association
- assessing the feasibility of establishing state-based wellness programs that TMA may offer to its members; and
- building upon the 2024 Tennessee Wellness Law

Efforts to improve mental health access for physicians remain ongoing; however, progress is being made on the legislative front. Physician Wellness Committee members, Drs. Reeves Johnson and Michael Baron, successfully passed legislation this session that allows state licensing boards to issue conditional licenses to applicants who disclose past mental health diagnoses during a confidential preliminary review, provided they agree to successfully complete a peer assistance program. These actions would not be reportable to the National Practitioner Data Bank, thereby helping to reduce stigma for physicians. This law passed the Tennessee General Assembly on April 16, 2025, and will take effect immediately.

Respectfully submitted,

Edward Capparelli, MD, Chair

2024-2025 Committee Members

- Edward Capparelli, MD, Chair
- Arthur Townsend, MD

- Deborah Christiansen, MD
- Desiree Burroughs-Ray, MD
- Harry Severance, MD
- Jim Lancaster, MD
- Cynthia Rector, MD
- Mary Jane Brown, MD
- Michael Baron, MD
- Michael Kodsi, MD
- Michelle Cochran, MD
- Mukta Panda, MD
- Reeves Johnson, MD
- Sapna Kripalani, MD
- Lauren Favors, MD, Resident/Fellow Section
- Amber Shirley, Student Section
- Erika Thomas, Staff Liaison