

## Student member's open letter ...

Dear Student Member,

WELCOME and THANK YOU for becoming a student member of Physician Assistants in Hospice and Palliative Medicine! I am Matt Hawkins, a fellow PA student member at Touro University California, and will be acting as your student representative to the PAHPM Board of Directors.

As the demand for PAs increases, so does an ever-increasing need for practitioners in Hospice and Palliative Care environments. As you have expressed with your membership, the interest to practice as a PA in these fields also continues to grow. However, competition for jobs and legislative barriers to practice make working in Hospice and Palliative Care a relatively new field for PAs that we are actively striving to break into further.

Among other things, PAHPM is actively involved in influencing legislation that aims to remove workforce barriers and expand our scope of practice - which allowing PAs to contribute more to the field of Hospice and Palliative Care. In addition to these important legislative goals, PAHPM is dedicated to keeping a general pulse on nationwide trends in Hospice and



Photo courtesy Kevin Burkett | Flickr

## Federal Legislative Priorities Conference Call

By Rich Lamkin, MPH, PA-C

In May, PAHPM was able to conference call with AAPA's Department of Federal Advocacy for updates on legislative efforts regarding PAs in hospice and palliative medicine. The first resolution has been introduced several years running. H.R. 1284: Medicare Patient Access to Hospice Act of 2017 was again introduced into the House of Representatives in March 2017, which would specifically add Physician Assistants to the Social Security Act as billable providers under CMS.

There are also several other relevant Bills introduced to the House and Senate, which would positively affect PAs practicing in our specialty. S. 693/H.R.1676: Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (PCHETA) which was proposed to ensure a well-trained palliative care workforce is available for individuals with serious illness and at the end of life. Among multiple initiatives, it calls for the expansion of the types of professionals trained to provide hospice care, including physician assistants. Another excited piece of legislation is H.R.2797: Patient Choice and Quality Care Act of 2017 which is proposed to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for advanced illness care coordination services for Medicare beneficiaries. This

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Help us advocate for PAs in HPM

Take a quick survey:

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Are you a PA interested in jobs in HPM?

For more information, JOIN US! [pahpm.org/Membership](http://pahpm.org/Membership)

Members Only

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### CONTACT US

General Information or to report a problem with the website:

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Membership Information: [members@pahpm.org](mailto:members@pahpm.org)

## Meet a Member | Jeff Myers, PA-C, MMSc, MIH



I believe PAs have an important role in Palliative and Hospice medicine. Ever since I first met the initial members of the PAHPM group back in 2015 and became more aware of other PAs doing what I love, I have come to realize that we need this important group to plan, organize and educate other PAs about both primary and specialist palliative care.

I have a background that started out initially in rural primary care and over the years I eventually found my way back to Palliative Care. I was lucky to have an amazing mentor and PA who first introduced me to it while in PA School at Emory University. It was then with a family facing the withdrawal of care for their injured son that I realized I must have that palliative "gene" that many of you also possess. I continue to find it an honor to share that role in helping symptoms and guiding those difficult discussions which make palliative care so special to me.

Currently, I am on an inpatient palliative care team at Oregon Health Science University (OHSU)

in Portland, Oregon. I share responsibilities as the clinical lead and have a team the interim Palliative Section Head for our Division. I am instructor and an active lecturer on Palliative Care and other topics at OHSU's PA Program, as well as a preceptor for PA, nursing, and medical students, residents, and fellows. I spend a great deal of time educating the house staff throughout our hospital on both palliative and end-of-life care. I have been working on revising our OHSU PA curriculum to better prepare future PAs, and have presented at our state PA conference to help increase awareness of primary palliative care and the PA role. As PAs, we know that we are active in all aspects of our patients' medical care, and it's important that this extends to when they have serious and life-threatening illness or even at the end-of-life. I look forward to the day when we can continue our role as medical providers right through when our patients enroll in hospice.

I hope that my experience, interest and passion can be helpful to PAHPM. Thanks for being a part of this movement!

## Legislature Update

Please continue to voice your support for legislature that reflects positively on PAs practicing in Hospice and Palliative care. One such piece is H.R. 2797 "The Patient Choice and Quality of Care Act of 2017, introduced in early June by Oregon Rep. Earl Blumenauer. This bill is set to provide more attention on people living with chronic, serious and life-threatening illnesses by finding models to provide better access and platforms for quality care. Of particular note is Rep. Blumenauer's specific inclusion of PAs as qualified members of the interdisciplinary teams that need to be providing care for these patients. Please take a look at the bill on <http://www.congress.gov/> and see if your representative is supporting—if not, encourage them and share why! I've written and spoken with Rep. Blumenauer's office over the years about the PA role in Hospice and Palliative care, and along with his early support for H.R. 1284, the "Medicare Patient Access to Hospice Act of 2017" which gives PAs the ability to be reimbursed as hospice providers, he has listened and is supporting our goal of improving patient care with PAs included in the process.

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specifically identifies PAs as a part of the interdisciplinary palliative care team.

Given our current political climate, and healthcare being a "hot button" topic, AAPA's federal advocacy feels it might be challenging to bring attention to some of these resolutions and introducing them to the House and Senate for votes. AAPA has assured us they will continue their efforts to advocate on our behalf at every opportunity.

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Palliative Medicine including research and expanding PA education.

As your student representative to the board of directors of PAHPM, I will periodically send you updates on our efforts and achievements, general hospice and palliative care information, and links to resources that will hopefully help you in your PA education and career development. I may also occasionally send you surveys to get your input. Your perspective is valuable and will help PAHPM to continue to grow into a comprehensive organization leading and representing Physician Assistants devoted to Hospice and Palliative Care.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me with any of your questions, concerns, comments, or ideas that I can introduce at our monthly board meetings.

Also, stay tuned to the latest news via our *brand new* [twitter](https://twitter.com/PAs_in_HPM) account: [https://twitter.com/PAs\\_in\\_HPM](https://twitter.com/PAs_in_HPM)

And, the PAHPM Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/Physician-Assistants-in-Hospice-and-Palliative-Medicine-PAHPM-161668107223574/>

Be well, take care, and best of luck in your PA education!

- Matt Hawkins, PAS