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New Law to Safeguard Health Care Professionals' Well-Being

September 22, 2022 (PHOENIX) — On Saturday, September 24, the well-being of Arizona's physicians and nurses will become safeguarded by the enforcement of the [Arizona Medical Association's \(ArMA\)](#) signature legislation, [HB2429](#) (health professional wellness programs; confidentiality). This landmark bill — which will become effective on Arizona's General Effective Date after [passing](#) with nearly unanimous support during Arizona's 2022 Legislative Session — allows for the establishment of confidential wellness programs for the state's health care professionals. By creating legal protection for physicians, nurses, and other health care professionals who wish to receive mental health care in complete confidence, HB2429 removes an often-cited barrier: the fear of professional repercussion for seeking help.

"Protections for physicians and health professions colleagues is critical; those who serve our patients need to be able to attend to their own health and healing as well," expressed ArMA's President, Jennifer Hartmark-Hill, MD. "We must continue to improve the system to combat stigma around mental health care and to put in place protections to allay fears from clinicians that they may face repercussions for seeking timely and ongoing support and care. Given the physical, emotional, and mental demands put on members of our health care teams, mental health care is essential to preserving well-being and maintaining the highest levels of excellence in compassionate and competent patient care. HB2429 puts in place necessary protections to help promote viable pathways for whole-person care for our healers."

Stress, anxiety, burnout, and moral injury have always been significant challenges for health care professionals, who regularly face demanding schedules, high-stress situations, and emotionally taxing work. However, the COVID-19 pandemic severely exacerbated this crisis and threw the grave need for legislation like HB2429 into the light.

"To physicians and other health care professionals, tending to a patient's health is the highest priority," remarked Representative Amish Shah, MD, sponsor of HB2429. "The stigma in the medical field would have us believe that we cannot provide excellent care to our patients while maintaining our own well-being. HB2429 will contribute significantly to the breakdown of this misconception, clearing the path for Arizona's health care workforce to find the support, peace, and help they need."

HB2429 will become enforceable at a time when mental health is at the forefront of the public's mind, as millions of Americans recognize National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. Much like the mission of this national observance, ArMA's signature legislation aims to increase access to necessary resources and eliminate the stigma around seeking mental health care.

In addition to advocating for legislation that champions physician well-being, ArMA is proud to provide the physician community relief through its peer support program, [DOC2DOCAZ](#). This free, confidential program serves Arizona's physicians, resident physicians, fellows, and medical students. Made possible through a partnership with the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), DOC2DOCAZ pairs participants with a trained peer coach who can provide the guidance and support needed to achieve well-being and life balance.

While eliminating mental health stigma in the practice of medicine remains a lofty goal, the implementation of HB2429 constitutes a historic step forward in the effort.

Saturday, September 24, marks the General Effective Date for the hundreds of bills — including HB2429 — that were enacted during Arizona's 2022 Legislative Session. Once effective, HB2429 will be added to the Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) under Title 32, Chapter 32, Article 1 as § 32-3229.01.

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About Arizona Medical Association

The Arizona Medical Association (ArMA) is the largest organization in the state representing the interests of all physicians. Since 1892, ArMA has been advancing patient care and providing its members with leadership, advocacy, education, and community. For more information, visit www.AZmed.org and follow ArMA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#).