GLAO
THE GREAT LAKES ASSOCIATION OF ORTHODONTISTS

Council on Government Advocacy (COGA) Report 9/24/26

We are getting ready for the next Professional Advocacy Conference to be held in Washington, DC on March 8-9, 2027. Attendees will be introduced to AAO Advocacy and our bipartisan Orthodontic Policy Priorities for our patients and members. Members of Congress will address the attendees on the first day and at the reception following the program. The second day we meet with our groups in the morning and get ready for our meetings that day on Capitol Hill. Thank you to everyone who has donated to the AAOPAC to allow us to meet with members of Congress and advocate for our patients and members. A member must donate to the AAOPAC to be able to attend the conference.

Members of Congress are not aware of our patient safety concerns, profession and legislative concerns or small business concerns unless you maintain a relationship with them to be able to continually educate and be a resource for them when they have questions. The name of the game is relationship building. Our issues are bipartisan and because of that we are well respected on the Hill. We do not advocate for our personal policial parties or discuss the AAOPAC while we attend our meetings. Our Professional Lobbying Team is with us during our meetings to take notes and guide us about what to do and not do in the meetings. Each group will have a number of seasoned orthodontists so if you have never attended a Professional Advocacy Conference, no worries. Members in the group decide who will discuss each topic and we hope that you will be able to contribute to the discussions. If you are a constituent of the congress person, they will try to stop and say hello to you if they are able. Most of the time you will meet with the Congress person's staff member who is assigned to the legislative areas we are discussing. The staff member's job is to meet with groups and bring back specific topics for the congress person. Many staff members have worked on the Hill for many years, with different Congress members and in different areas of the government.

COGA has two virtual meetings per year and an in-person meeting right before the Advocacy conference. The council is currently reviewing the AAO's AI in Clinical Orthodontics Position Paper. The council guides the priorities for advocacy according to the results of our annual membership survey. The council chairs are a resource for the reference committees at the House of Delegates. The Chair meets once a year with the other council chairs to hear the priorities of other councils and to find ways to collaborate with each other. We review and approve new candidates for the AAO National Advocacy Network. Participating in the National

Advocacy Network is a great way to get involved and there is a place for you depending upon your interests.

I will be ending my term on COGA in 2028. I had attended a few Professional Advocacy Conferences in the beginning and was frustrated with what I was seeing in government. This was the last council I ever thought that I would join. Along the way, I became more educated in the "game" of politics and how the government works. I found out that what you see and hear about government is only the extreme views of each party. The people talking are using the extreme ideas of the other party to scare you into donating money or they just like to talk to the media and are actually not contributing to legislation. The majority of actual legislation passed is bipartisan and is not interesting to hear about on the news or social media. This last year has been unusual because one party has control of both houses. Anyone who might be interested in participating on COGA when my term concludes in 2028, is welcome to talk to me about the position.

Be sure to read AAO publication, **The Advocate**, and visit the quarterly Advocacy Dashboard online to keep up with our latest advocacy efforts.

I am thankful to serve,

Valerie Martone
COGA