# February 2023 Advocacy Recap

March 7, 2023

**Charles Fiegl:**

Hello and welcome to the CAP Advocacy Recap, a monthly podcast dedicated to catching you up on the top news for pathologists. I'm Charles Fiegl from the CAP's Advocacy Communications Team here with your February recap.

This month, we'll review congressional efforts to tackle Medicare cuts with legislation, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services halts its independent dispute resolution process, and the CAP asks a Medicare contractor to revise its coverage policies for special stains. But first, we are joined by Dr. Kalisha Hill. Dr. Hill serves as a governor on the CAP'S Board of Governors and was recently installed as the chair of PathPAC. Dr. Hill, thank you for joining us today to discuss this latest development with PathPAC. For those listeners who might not be familiar with this organization, what is PathPAC?

**Kalisha Hill, MD, MBA, FCAP, FASCP:**

Yes. Well, first and foremost, the College of American Pathologists is the only pathologist organization that has a political action committee or PAC. So PathPAC is an essential tool in the CAP'S advocacy efforts. PathPAC drives the growth of lasting relationships between CAP members and key lawmakers, and I want to emphasize that we built those relationships regardless of political party.

**Charles Fiegl:**

Thank you, Dr. Hill. And so how and why did you first become a PathPAC member?

**Kalisha Hill, MD, MBA, FCAP, FASCP:**

Well, that's a very interesting story. In 2014, I was appointed to the PathPAC board. Once I had completed my term updating the breast protocols for the cancer committee, I knew of state legislative initiatives through my work with the Illinois Society of Pathologists. But once I was entrenched in the inner workings of PathPAC, I realized the grave importance of relationships with those who write and vote on laws that directly impact, not only our practiced as pathologists, but our patients. So now as a governor of a college, when I was asked to lead the PathPAC board, I was, of course, elated to serve. In a society where other organizations have members that automatically donate to their PAC, including those whose interest can be diametrically opposed to ours, I am enthusiastic to encourage my fellow pathologists to support PathPAC.

**Charles Fiegl:**

Wonderful. And as you know, Dr. Hill, we're coming up soon to the Pathologist Leadership Summit and PathPAC will run a competition for the house of delegates that meets during the summit called Back the PAC. Can you tell us a little bit more about this event?

**Kalisha Hill, MD, MBA, FCAP, FASCP:**

Absolutely. Well, first and foremost, the Pathologist Leadership Summit is an excellent venue to network with our colleagues from across the country and really hear learnings and best practices from one another and current and future advocacy issues that may impact us. This is our second Back the PAC event after a successful competition in 2021. We will be dividing the house of delegates into five teams based by state, and each team will compete by donating to PathPAC. At the end of the competition, the winners will be recognized as the team with the highest participation rate and the team that raises the most funds for PathPAC. And we'll be recognizing these winners through a celebration during the Pathologist Leadership Summit. We plan to have a dinner or a reception for the Back the PAC winners so we are working on inviting special guests to the reception. Last year we hosted Senator Tim Kaine from Virginia and he was our honored guest.

**Charles Fiegl:**

Wonderful. So what are the goals for the competition?

**Kalisha Hill, MD, MBA, FCAP, FASCP:**

So we have a couple of objectives to meet the needs of this competition. The first is, we want to drive more CAP members to be part of PathPAC. The more members who contribute, the stronger our voice will be when we advocate on the issues that are critically important to our patients and our specialty. We also want to raise PathPAC's profile among an engaged group of leaders within the CAP and grow the culture of supporting PathPAC in these spaces. The house of delegates is comprised of outstanding leaders in pathology throughout the US, and we want to ensure that they know how important PathPAC is to us as a whole and to their own individual practices. And also, we want to have fun. Having a healthy competition is a great way to get everyone energized and involved in advocating for our specialty. We will have a wonderful celebratory event for the winners.

**Charles Fiegl:**

Great. And our final question, so what's next for the competition and PathPAC?

**Kalisha Hill, MD, MBA, FCAP, FASCP:**

So Back the PAC begins March 16th and it will run for four weeks. We will have leader boards posted each week leading up to the Pathologist Leadership Summit. So keep an eye out for those who's ahead in the participation rate and most funds raise categories. Then we will announce the winners during the house of delegates meeting on April 15th.

**Charles Fiegl:**

Great. Well, thank you so much, Dr. Hill, for joining us today, and good luck with the competition.

**Kalisha Hill, MD, MBA, FCAP, FASCP:**

Thank you. Looking forward to it.

**Charles Fiegl:**

And now, I'll briefly recap a few stories featured in the CAP'S advocacy update newsletter from last month. In the wake of years of ongoing Medicare payment cuts and dwindling congressional relief, representative Larry Bucshon of Indiana has called for oversight hearings on Medicare physician payment reform. Previously, representative Bucshon solicited comments from Medicare stakeholders to address flaws in the system. He and his colleagues are looking for bipartisan solutions to reform Medicare's payment system for physicians. The CAP, the American Medical Association, add over 100 organizations recently asked Congress to address substantive Medicare payment reform, recognizing that payment cuts will continue until broader reforms are implemented. The CAP has also provided Congress with its recommendations to improve Medicare's payment system.

For our second story, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has hit pause on the federal independent dispute resolution process. The CMS did so after a federal judge in Texas agreed that the government's rules for the independent disputes resolution process was inconsistent with federal law. The judge agreed with the Texas Medical Association that the government's latest regulations still heavily relied on qualifying payment amounts, which favors insurers and places a thumb on the scale. The decision was a victory for physicians, including pathologists who have fought against these improper regulations.

And finally, on February 21st, the insurer Cigna as the Medicare Part A or B Medicare administrative contractor for Ohio and Kentucky held an open meeting in response to the CAP'S reconsideration request regarding a local coverage determination on special histochemical stains in immunohistochemical stains. The CAP has long advocated for the withdrawal of this local coverage determination since it was issued in 2015. The CAP formally submitted a request for reconsideration of the local coverage determination on January 4th, 2022, and cited the policies medically and scientifically inaccurate language and its attempt to define good pathology practice.

That's all for our February advocacy recap. We will continue to provide updates on these issues and more in future editions of advocacy update and this podcast. For more, follow us on Twitter at CAPDC Advocacy. Once again, I'm Charles Fiegl and we will see you next month.