



January 3, 2019

The Honorable Kevin Stitt
Governor-Elect of the State of Oklahoma
2300 N. Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73015

Dear Governor-Elect Stitt:

The Oklahoma State Medical Association (OSMA), representing more than 4,000 physicians and medical student members across the state, the Oklahoma Osteopathic Association (OOA), representing more than 3,200 licensed DO's, as well as the entire medical community, look forward to working with you and your administration in bringing our state into the TOP 10 in positive health-related statistics.

Toward that end, the state's Medicaid system (*SoonerCare*) administered by the Oklahoma Health Care Authority (OHCA) plays a vital role in this important mission. Through *SoonerCare*, the OHCA administers health care services provided to certain qualifying low-income children, seniors, the disabled, those being treated for breast or cervical cancer and those seeking family planning services.

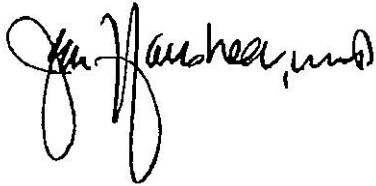
Since 2009, as the state and national economy slackened, reimbursement rates for *SoonerCare* services have been methodically reduced, eventually diving to 87% of Medicare provider fee reimbursement levels. This places a severe burden on those physicians serving the Medicaid population. Physicians are key economic drivers in the state of Oklahoma with each physician supporting approximately 12 direct/indirect jobs and providing an average economic output of \$1.9M (AMA 2018 Economic Impact Study attached). This is especially important in rural Oklahoma where many Medicaid patients saturate the population base.

The medical community has continued to be a steadfast supporter of the OHCA and *SoonerCare* during these recent challenging budget years, knowing the economy would eventually strengthen and rates would do so as well. In fact, during the 2018 session, the legislature recognized the importance of enhancing those reimbursement rates toward reestablishing their previous level. Effective October 1, 2018, provider fee reimbursement levels were increased by 3% bringing them to approximately 90% of Medicare rates. That momentum should be maintained in effort to attract providers into the rural areas where they are most needed.

The FY2020 budget submitted by the OHCA requests those reimbursement rates be restored back to 100% of the Medicare provider fee level. This will help stabilize and more adequately fund providers for services afforded to those qualifying Oklahomans in need of health care services thereby strengthening Oklahoma's economy as well as our long-term health related statistics.

The OSMA and OOA, as well as the additional undersigned medical related organizations, respectfully request your support of the OHCA FY2020 Budget request. We share your desire to bring Oklahoma into the TOP 10! Please feel free to contact us if we can be of service.

Sincerely,



Jean Hausheer, MD, FACS
OSMA President



Chris Shearer, DO
OOA President



Larry Bookman, MD
OSMA President Elect
Governor-Elect Stitt Health Transition Team Member

Other Health Related Organizations in SUPPORT of the OHCA FY2020 Budget Request

American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists, Oklahoma
Oklahoma Academy of Family Physicians
Oklahoma College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
Oklahoma State Radiological Society
Oklahoma Academy of Ophthalmology
American Academy of Pediatrics, Oklahoma
Oklahoma Psychiatric Physicians Association

