

NEWSLETTER
2024

Member
SPOTLIGHT
By Joy Jarnagin

What is your advocacy passion?

Throughout my educational career, I strove to impact as many people as possible by providing compassionate care. Many would agree that this path follows the typical medicine niche, but is it the only option? This question led to constant internal dialogue as I often fulfilled my aspirations outside the classic clinical walls. From representing local communities to spearheading initiatives or enacting policy changes that have led to positive outcomes on a regional level, I found myself thriving! Challenging myself to see how far I could take the voices of those I represented. I thought that when starting medical school, this voice would etch away but instead, it amplified how important it is to be at the decision-making table than to be on the chopping block.

“
...**at** the decision-making table than to be **on** the chopping block.
”

How did you get involved in advocacy?

Advocacy has always been a part of my educational space. It started early in my undergraduate year when my friends convinced me to run for a seat in my university’s Student Senate. Initially not enthusiastic about sitting in a three-hour bi-monthly meeting with no clinical



Photo by National SOMA

Syed Rizvi, OMS IV
OBI NATIONAL DIRECTOR

relevance, my lack of understanding of what I could voice was evident. However, after my first meeting, I returned exposed to a foundational understanding of day-to-day university operations, the intricacies behind contracts, and how much of a student’s tuition is invested in prioritizing students. It became clear how my voice is an amplification for the student body, and such an impact should be a lasting one.

During my gap year in 2020, I transferred my initial exposure to the Detroit District 6 Office as a Public Policy Intern, where a health background was preferred. While I was already working on the frontlines, having the ability to return to a decision-making table to shape my city’s health policy during such a crucial moment was enticing. As I fulfilled my duties working alongside policy writers, I was amazed to see how my health background

“
...**upstream solutions...**
prevent patients from becoming ill in the *first* place.
”

became a commodity for the office. By means of creating policy, I ended up with outcomes that every physician aims for — finding upstream solutions that prevent patients from becoming ill in the first place.

As I started medical school, I assumed that my advocacy aspirations would have ended. After all, I am starting medical school. But as I got introduced initially to my state osteopathic society and then to SOMA and Omega Beta Iota, I found myself more involved than ever to ensure that our profession and our patient's voices remain protected.

What has been your favorite advocacy moment as a member of SOMA?

As a Senior Resolution Committee Member spectating the SOMA House of Delegates is by far my favorite advocacy moment. Seeing the future of SOMA and, concurrently the osteopathic profession, it is always great to see that our future continues to be in safe, passionate hands and that there will always be many ready to answer the call when the right decision-makers are needed at the table. During this time, I love to remain connected with junior advocates from my school who continue



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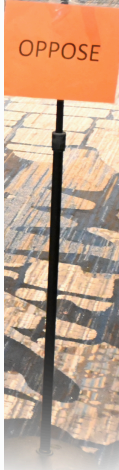


Photo by Syed Rizvi

to carry the passion for advocacy (locally and nationally) I learned about not too long ago. Shout out to my Region III Trustee Maria Rollinger and my Michigan State SOMA President Kyra Powers and NLO Riley Warlick!



Photo by AOA

What advice would you give to someone who is interested in advocacy?

The world is becoming a very polarized space politically but knowing that your voice is always essential is crucial. There will be many spaces where debates and disagreements will arise. Listen, as finding a middle ground and advancing as a group will get you further than running a one-person show. Sometimes, you will feel like your voice is being set aside. Do not ever back down, thinking your voice is no longer needed in that space. Regroup, recover, and continue to pursue what you believe is right.

Your path to advocacy will never be the same as your peers. Always explore paths less traveled, and do not be afraid to ask questions - the worst response you can possibly get is a simple "no." Be brave and be bold. Remember, as an advocate, you represent the voices of those not at the decision-making table. Make sure it is heard.



...your voice is **always** essential...



If you are interested in connecting with Syed or need of a mentor you can reach out to him on: [@_rizvi.syed](#) [in syedrizzvi-1](#)

*Nominate an outstanding SOMA member for Member Spotlight [HERE](#).

Internal News



AOA HOUSE OF DELEGATES RECAP

By Anika Gupta

This year, the Student Osteopathic Medical Association (SOMA) presented three resolutions at the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) House of Delegates (HOD). Of these resolutions, two were focused on Public Affairs and the final one was categorized as Professional Affairs. In case you are not familiar with the HOD process, resolutions are submitted by various organizations and reviewed by a committee that makes suggestions for how the members should vote. Then the resolutions are presented at the HOD, and delegates vote to either approve, disapprove, or refer resolutions back to the author. If approved, the resolution is adopted as AOA policy. All three resolutions submitted by SOMA this year were approved!

H-435



The first resolution discussed on the HOD floor was H-435 "Addressing the compromised safety of Healthcare Workers practicing in areas of conflict and the resulting threat to Healthcare Infrastructure." This resolution aimed to advocate for the right of physicians to practice medicine without fear of persecution in war zones and conflict areas while emphasizing the need for humanitarian aid in these areas.



H-436

Resolution H-436 "Childhood and Teenage Sexual Exposure" was an amendment to Policy H420-A/21. The topic of the resolution centered around the idea that abstinence-only education does not significantly reduce rates of teen sexual activity. This resolution advocated to broaden the curriculum used by states to prevent teen pregnancy by not solely focusing on abstinence.



Photo by Canva

H-341

The third and final resolution was H-341 titled "Increased awareness of Mental Health Conditions in Nursing Home Residents." This resolution called for the AOA to recognize the prevalence of mental health among nursing home residents and encourage physicians to use evidence-based medicine to address these mental health conditions.

Overall, SOMA and the College of Student Government Presidents (COSGP) did an outstanding job representing the student voice. Special shout out to Nate Gentry, the SOMA Parliamentarian, and everyone who spoke during the debate! Thank you for the time you all spent advocating for osteopathic medical students.

ADOPTED AS AMENDED

Addressing the compromised safety of Healthcare Workers practicing in areas of conflict and the resulting threat to Healthcare Infrastructure

ADOPTED AS AMENDED

Childhood and Teenage Sexual Exposure

ADOPTED AS AMENDED

Increased awareness of Mental Health Conditions in Nursing Home Residents

For further information on the 2024 AOA HOD Resolutions, check out this [link!](#)

Special Thanks to National SOMA Newsletter Task Force

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