

I was fortunate enough to be selected by the New England AUA to attend the Annual Advocacy Summit and help deliver the AUA's asks to Rhode Island representatives. Having spent the summer before medical school as a civic fellow at the Department of Health and Human Services, I was excited to return to Washington, D.C. and learn about the AUA's involvement in advocacy.

On the first morning of the summit, I participated in an introductory session led by residents who were passionate about advocacy and had been involved in the summit for some time. Over the next few days, we would learn about the AUA's key asks this year and deliver them to our congressional representatives, a task which seemed quite daunting. As a medical student, I knew next to nothing about many of these topics. In just a few short days, however, I learned an incredible amount about the topics, which ranged from protecting telehealth access to improving diversity in clinical trials, and became more comfortable with the idea of discussing them with my representatives. Throughout the conference, one of the key points we were taught in speaking with our representatives was that patient stories are significantly more powerful than statistics or rational arguments. The educational seminars were also excellent and engaging and taught by urologists who were experts in these topics.

In a general session entitled "The Craft of Urology Advocacy on the Hill: A Primer", we were taught that legislative success comes from consistent advocacy over several years, and persistence pays off. For example, the AUA successfully advocated for a bill to raise awareness and provide data on urotrauma but only after several years and calling for Congress to reintroduce the bill every year during that time period.

On the last full day of the summit, I met with Dr. Elias Hyams, an attending at Brown and the NE AUA's Rhode Island representative, to review our asks and what we would say to our representatives. Dr. Hyams kindly offered me my choice of the asks to introduce, and he helped formulate my words. While the pandemic prevented most offices from meeting in person at the Capitol, we could thankfully meet over Zoom. The congressional aides were very receptive to our asks, and we even spoke with Senator Jack Reed.

I also met many residents and attendings, many of whom had been involved in advocacy or civic engagement to some extent in the past. There were plentiful breaks, which provided opportunities to meet urologists across the country and hear about their unique backgrounds and interests in advocacy. Furthermore, all of the residents I met had the full support of their programs to attend the conference. Overall, it was inspiring to meet so many accomplished residents and attendings at the summit, as I didn't previously realize the extent to which the AUA and urologists led the charge in advocacy.

As a medical student who still has a ways to go, I am very grateful for the opportunity to attend this summit and learn from experienced residents and attendings about the pivotal role that urologists play in advocating for our patients. I learned that access to urologic healthcare in the U.S. relies on the advocacy of urologists. My time at the summit confirmed that I had chosen the right specialty to apply into and augmented my desire to be a part of this community. Thank you to the NE AUA for this opportunity.

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