



Miller School Student Plans to Combine Advocacy with Patient Care

When Molly Benoit was named vice chair of the Committee on Legislation and Advocacy in the Medical Student Section of the American Medical Association, no one who knows her well was surprised. After all, Benoit, a third-year M.D.-track student at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, had spent three busy years in non-profit advocacy work in Washington, D.C., before turning to public health and ultimately to medicine.



Molly Benoit.

“I advocated for reproductive justice, immigration reform, and climate change policy, but I really fell in love with health



care reform,” she said. “I wanted to continue working to make communities healthier, but I also wanted to have an impact on the health of individuals. Medicine seemed like the right next step.”

Still, Benoit didn’t leave her passion for advocacy behind.

“I became involved with the AMA in my first semester at the Miller School,” she said. “I wanted to remain involved in public policy and advocacy work – I didn’t want to lose that part of my identity. The AMA has a chapter of the Medical Student Section here on campus, so I joined and encouraged other students to do so. I am now the president of our school chapter, as well as a member of the governing council of Region 4, so I currently play local, regional, and national roles in the organization.”

Leadership takes notice

Henri R. Ford, M.D., M.H.A., dean and chief academic officer of the Miller School, wrote to Benoit after her recent appointment was announced.

“I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations,” he said. “This is a great honor for you, as well as for the Miller School of Medicine. I appreciate your leadership.”

Benoit, a native of Palm City, Florida, studied political science at the University of Florida, then earned a graduate degree in public health at George Washington University. When she decided to apply to medical schools, she entered a post-baccalaureate program at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia to strengthen her background in science, math, and other subjects that would be critical in achieving her goal.



It worked, and she chose the Miller School – not only to be closer to her family after years in the Northeast, but also because of the variety of patients she could treat and learn from in Miami. As she moves through third-year rotations, her plan is to become a primary care physician, focusing on pediatrics and family medicine.

She also plans to keep active as a physician-advocate.

“Advocacy for our patients is an integral part of being a physician,” Benoit said. “According to a National Academy of Medicine report, what we can do for you in the office has only about 20 percent of the possible impact on your overall health. I don’t think enough students coming into medical school know that. I want to help educate my peers – how simple it can be and how much it matters.”