New York pediatricians no longer need to be concerned about being disturbed at random times of the day and night in order to give authorization for the institution of standing orders for routine newborn care in the well baby nursery, thanks to new legislation passed in Albany, under the leadership of Member of the Assembly Richard Gottfried (Chair of the Assembly Health Committee) and Senator Kemp Hannon (Chair of the Senate Health Committee,) and signed by the governor on December 7, 2018. The law (Public Health Law, Sec 2803 v.2) adds a new exception to the existing rule barring the use of non-patient-specific standing orders in hospitals. Previously, nurses were allowed to institute non-patient-specific standing orders only for certain listed exceptions (the administration of immunizations, the emergency treatment of anaphylaxis, tuberculosis testing, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) testing, opioid related overdose treatments, hepatitis C testing and screening for syphilis, gonorrhea and/or chlamydia infections) without a physician order for a specific patient. Once the law takes effect, the birth of a normal newborn will become another situation when a Pediatric Department and hospital-approved set of standing orders may be instituted without contacting the attending physician for approval.

The new law, conceived and developed by current Section on Administration and Practice Management (SOAPM) Executive Committee members Gail Schoenfeld MD FAAP (NY-2) and Jesse Hackell MD FAAP (NY-3) and former EC member Herschel Lessin MD FAAP (NY-3), and shepherded through the legislative process by Elie Ward, Director of Policy & Advocacy for NYS AAP Chapters 1, 2 & 3, recognizes that the delivery of a healthy newborn does not constitute an illness, and that the newborn is hospitalized solely because the mother elected to deliver in the hospital and remains there for recovery following the birth of her newborn. Pediatricians should discuss with their hospital administrative and Pediatric staff the appropriate manner for developing and implementing such standing orders for routine newborn care. The new law takes effect 120 days after signing, but development and adoption of such orders may begin immediately.

The passage of this law will allow for prompt institution of routine newborn care orders, thus improving the timeliness of care for these newborns, and will also positively impact the quality of life for New York pediatricians. It is just another example of the impact of advocacy, at both Chapter and national AAP levels, for the benefit of both pediatric patients and pediatricians.