A United Vision for 2026: Strengthening Our Voice, Our Value, and Our Future

Steve Sellars

As we begin a new year, I'm struck by both the resilience of the Urgent Care community and the urgency of the moment we're in. Over the past several months, through conversations with operators, clinicians, vendors, and other partners, one message has been unmistakably clear: Urgent Care is ready to move forward together with renewed purpose, a stronger voice, and a sharper vision for the future.

2026 will be a pivotal year. The pressures facing healthcare are intensifying with rising costs, workforce challenges, shifting reimbursement strategies, and ongoing gaps in access across communities. Yet, amid that uncertainty stands a care model that continues to deliver reliability, responsiveness, and real value. This is our moment not only to serve patients well, but to demonstrate why Urgent Care is essential to the health of our nation.

Our path forward begins with a clear, united focus across three priorities: advocacy, member engagement, and sustainability and growth.

Advocacy:
Strength in Unity, Power in Our Voice

If 2025 taught us anything, it's that Urgent Care is strongest when we speak together. Policymakers and payers are paying closer attention than ever to cost, quality, and access. If we want a seat at the table, we must show up with one voice, supported by solid data and real-world insight.

In 2026, the Urgent Care Association (UCA) will advance a unified advocacy agenda, working closely with our regional Chapter partners to ensure our priorities reflect the needs of operators across all markets. We will highlight outcomes, cost savings, and quality metrics that show Urgent Care's essential role in today's healthcare landscape. And we will lean on our members: your stories, data, and relationships bring credibility and perspective to every policy conversation.

Steve Sellars is Chief Executive Officer of the Urgent Care Association.

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Advocacy isn't just "in Washington." It happens every time a member shares a data point with a payer, meets with a state legislator, or explains to a local employer why Urgent Care is an indispensable access point. Your voice matters, and in 2026, we will amplify it.

Member Engagement:
This Is the Year to Lean In

The strength of UCA has always come from its members through your leadership, innovation, and willingness to support one another. In 2026, we're calling on every member to help shape what comes next.

Engagement will be a central theme this year. We invite you to share what you're seeing in your markets—emerging trends, operational challenges, clinical insights, and new opportunities. Your expertise helps shape our advocacy, guide our education, and informs us about the resources we provide. Your participation in UCA's regional events, webinars, and the 2026 Urgent Care Convention at the Historic Hilton Chicago is equally important. These gatherings are more than meetings, they're where our collective direction is set.

Urgent Care thrives when it collaborates, and this is your call to action. Whether you're part of a national sys-

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tem or operate a single center, there is a seat at the table, and your involvement strengthens our future.

Sustainability and Growth: Building the Next Generation of Urgent Care

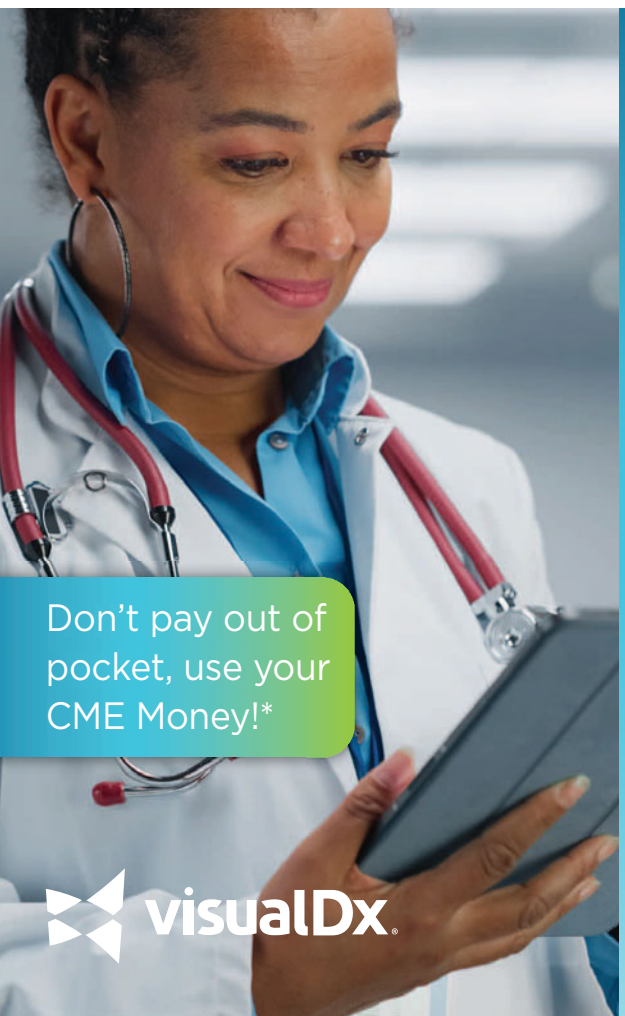
We are all thinking about what the next 3-5 years will look like. Ensuring the long-term sustainability of our industry requires measurable clinical quality, strong partnerships with employers, payers, health systems, and other stakeholders, continuous innovation in patient access and technology, and a commitment to recruiting and supporting the next generation of clinicians and leaders.

Most importantly, growth is not something that happens to our field, it's something we lead. By investing in better outcomes data, strengthening our advocacy position, elevating clinical excellence, and supporting one another, we will not only secure the future of Urgent Care, we will expand its influence in communities nationwide.

A Confident, United Path Forward

As we begin 2026, I'm more optimistic than ever about where this field is headed. The challenges are real, but so is the momentum. So is the unity. So is the opportunity. Urgent Care has earned its place as an essential, trusted access point in healthcare. Now, together, we must take the next step of proving our value, strengthening our voice, and defining the future of on-demand, everyday healthcare.

Thank you for your commitment, insight, and partnership. I'm excited for the work ahead and even more excited for what we will accomplish together. Here's to a strong, united, and impactful year for Urgent Care. ■



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