



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

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**Concerning Department of Health and Human Services Appropriations for
Fiscal Year 2010
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
Submitted for the Record
April 30, 2009**

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), I am pleased to submit this testimony in support of increased funding in fiscal year (FY) 2010 for the Title VII health professions education programs, the National Health Service Corps, the National Institutes of Health, and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. AACOM represents the administrations, faculty, and students of the nation's 25 colleges of osteopathic medicine and three branch campuses that offer the doctor of osteopathic medicine degree. Today, more than 15,500 students are enrolled in osteopathic medical schools. Nearly one in five U.S. medical students is training to be an osteopathic physician, a ratio that is expected to grow to one in four by 2019.

Title VII

The health professions education programs, authorized under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act and administered through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), support the training and education of health practitioners to enhance the supply, diversity, and distribution of the health care workforce, filling the gaps in the supply of health professionals not met by traditional market forces. Title VII and Title VIII nurse education programs are the only federal programs designed to train clinicians in interdisciplinary settings to meet the needs of special and underserved populations, as well as increase minority representation in the health care workforce.

According to HRSA, an additional 30,000 health practitioners are needed to alleviate existing health professional shortages. Combined with faculty shortages across health professions disciplines, racial and ethnic disparities in health care, and a growing, aging population, these needs strain an already fragile health care system. AACOM recommends \$330 million in FY 2010 for the Title VII programs. Investment in these programs, including the Training in Primary Care Medicine and Dentistry Program, the Health Careers Opportunity Program, and the Centers of Excellence, is necessary to address the primary care workforce shortage. Such an

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investment will help sustain the health workforce expansion supported by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and restore funding to critical programs that suffered drastic funding reductions in FY 2006 and remain well below FY 2005 levels.

National Health Service Corps

Approximately 50 million Americans live in communities with a shortage of health professionals, lacking adequate access to primary care. Through scholarships and loan repayment, HRSA's National Health Service Corps (NHSC) supports the recruitment and retention of primary care clinicians to practice in underserved communities. The NHSC is comprised of more than 4,000 clinicians, with more than half working in community health centers. Growth in HRSA's Health Center Program must be complemented with increases in the recruitment and retention of primary care clinicians to ensure adequate staffing. ARRA funding for the NHSC is vital in this regard, and additional investment will be necessary to sustain the progress once the ARRA funding period ends. AACOM recommends \$235 million in FY 2010 for the National Health Service Corps, the amount authorized under the Health Care Safety Net Amendments of 2002.

National Institutes of Health

Research funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) leads to important medical discoveries regarding the causes, treatments, and cures for common and rare diseases as well as disease prevention. These efforts improve our nation's health and save lives. The NIH funding under the ARRA will produce more high quality research. To seize the momentum created by the ARRA and maintain a robust research agenda, further investment will be needed. AACOM recommends \$33.35 billion in FY 2010 for the NIH.

In today's increasingly demanding and evolving medical curriculum, there is a critical need for more research geared toward evidence-based osteopathic medicine. AACOM believes that it is vitally important to maintain and increase funding for biomedical and clinical research in a variety of areas related to osteopathic principles and practice, including osteopathic manipulative medicine and comparative effectiveness. In this regard, AACOM encourages support for the NIH's National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine to continue fulfilling this essential research role.

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) supports research to improve health care quality, reduce costs, advance patient safety, decrease medical errors, and broaden access to essential services. AHRQ plays an important role in producing the evidence base needed to improve our nation's health and health care. The incremental increases for AHRQ's Effective Health Care Program in recent years, as well as the funding provided to AHRQ in the ARRA, will help AHRQ generate more comparative effectiveness research and expand the infrastructure needed to increase capacity to produce this evidence. More investment is needed, however, to fulfill AHRQ's mission and broader research agenda. AACOM recommends \$405 million in FY 2010 for AHRQ. This investment will preserve AHRQ's current programs while helping to restore its critical health care safety, quality, and efficiency initiatives.

AACOM greatly appreciates the support of the Subcommittee for these funding priorities in an ever increasing competitive environment and is grateful for the opportunity to submit its views. AACOM looks forward to continuing to work with the Subcommittee on these important matters.