



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

December 6, 2011

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Norman D. Dicks
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dennis Rehberg
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Inouye, Harkin, Rogers and Rehberg and Ranking Members Cochran, Shelby, Dicks and DeLauro:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), which represents the nation's 26 colleges of osteopathic medicine offering the doctor of osteopathic medicine (DO) degree at 34 locations in 25 states, I strongly urge you to prioritize funding for the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) programs, including Title VII health professions programs and the primary care training programs, in the final fiscal year (FY) 2012 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education spending bill.

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As you know, Title VII programs support the training and education of health care providers to enhance the nation's supply, diversity, and distribution of the health care workforce as well as support increased numbers of primary care providers and faculty in health care education and training programs. These programs increase the number of minority and disadvantaged students enrolling in health care programs, which works to increase minority representation in the health care workforce. They are the only federal programs designed to train clinicians in interdisciplinary settings to meet the needs of special and underserved populations.

Combined with faculty shortages across health professions disciplines, racial and ethnic disparities in health care, a growing, aging population and the demand for access to patient care, these needs strain an already fragile health care system. Investment in programs, such as the Primary Care Training and Enhancement Program, the Health Careers Opportunity Program, the Centers of Excellence, and the National Health Service Corps (NHSC), is crucial to address the primary care workforce shortage. Strengthening the workforce is a national priority, and the investment in these programs will help meet the demand for a well-trained, diverse workforce to provide quality patient care.

Investing in primary care reduces spending and decreases health care costs. The HRSA primary care training programs are critical to osteopathic medical schools to provide support to enhance clinical teaching and research as well as increase interdisciplinary recruitment, training, and faculty development. Today, more than 20,000 students are enrolled in osteopathic medical schools. Many current osteopathic medical students will pursue careers in primary care, and many will practice in rural and underserved areas; these are the geographical areas that already face shortages of primary care providers. Osteopathic medical students comprise just under 20 percent of all U.S. medical students, but this year, they received 40 percent of the NHSC scholarships awarded to all medical students (DO and MD). Preserving funding is critical to supporting primary care training and education as well as sustaining and growing the primary care workforce.

AACOM strongly supports the preservation of funding for HRSA programs and respectfully urges you to prioritize funding for these programs in the final fiscal year (FY) 2012 Labor-HHS-Education spending bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if AACOM can be of assistance in providing you with any additional information.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "SC Shannon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Stephen C. Shannon, DO, MPH
President and CEO