



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

June 1, 2011

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Orin G. Hatch
Ranking Member
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Baucus and Hatch:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), I am writing to urge you to hold confirmation hearings for Donald M. Berwick, MD, MPP, as Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). As the nation continues to struggle with rising health care costs and most recently a re-examination of the Medicare and Medicaid program structures, it is imperative that CMS have a confirmed administrator with authority, experience and vision to steer the agency in this new environment.

AACOM represents the administrators, faculty and students of the nation's 26 colleges of osteopathic medicine, offering the doctor of osteopathic medicine (DO) degree at 34 locations in 26 states. Today, more than 19,000 students are enrolled in osteopathic medical schools. Nearly one in five U.S. medical students is training to be an osteopathic physician. It is important to note that many of our students spend their careers practicing primary care in rural and underserved areas; these areas are already facing shortages of primary care providers.

For nearly three decades, Dr. Berwick has been a leading national advocate for health care improvement and promoting patient safety. As a pediatrician and a researcher, Dr. Berwick has long demonstrated support and understanding of the primary care environment, including the value to patients of a strong primary care system. He also very clearly recognizes the impediments inherent in the current system that act as barriers to providing high quality, cost effective care.

Physicians and patients face an environment in which health care costs continue to grow. As the largest health insurer with over \$800 billion in expenditures annually, CMS must be prepared to respond to health care providers and its beneficiaries. For the health care system and CMS to better meet the needs of the population, data must be used to measure quality outcomes, efficiency and value. Dr. Berwick's commitment to health services research, which AACOM shares, has the potential to improve how CMS pays for care, and to set an example for private payers.

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Since arriving at CMS, Dr. Berwick has shown enormous leadership in directing the agency's efforts to create better care for individuals, better health for populations and reduce per capita costs. These are critically important goals for our health care system. With nearly 1 in 3 Americans enrolled in a CMS-administered program, CMS has the ability to reshape health care delivery across the country. In the short time Dr. Berwick has been at CMS, he has already made significant progress, focusing on preventive care to control costs and to promote care delivery focused on coordination between providers.

In conclusion, AACOM believes that Dr. Donald Berwick will bring CMS into a new era and serve this nation well as CMS Administrator. We respectfully request that the Senate Finance Committee hold confirmation hearings as soon as possible. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact AACOM's Director of Government Relations, Pamela Murphy, at pmurphy@aacom.org or (301) 968-4151.

Sincerely,

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, D.O., M.P.H.
President and CEO