

May 3, 2011

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20201

Mary Wakefield, Ph.D., R.N.  
Administrator  
Health Resources and Services Administration  
5600 Fishers Lane  
Rockville, MD 20857

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL ([Kathleen.Sebelius@hhs.gov](mailto:Kathleen.Sebelius@hhs.gov) and [Mary.Wakefield@hrsa.hhs.gov](mailto:Mary.Wakefield@hrsa.hhs.gov))

Dear Secretary Sebelius and Dr. Wakefield:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), I would like to thank you for your continued leadership in advancing health care access, quality, and services for our nation. AACOM represents the administrations, faculty, and students of the nation's 26 colleges of osteopathic medicine (COMs) 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.

As you prepare the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) fiscal year (FY) 2011 spending measure (P.L. 112-10), we ask that you continue to support the Bureau of Health Professions (BHP) and oppose any funding cuts for these programs. As you know, these programs are vital to the osteopathic medical education community and the osteopathic profession to ensure a quality workforce that meets the demands of a growing population. AACOM asks for continued support for the BHP programs, including the following, which are of essential importance to COMs:

Primary Care Training and Enhancement (PCTE) Program

The PCTE Program will support awards to eligible primary care physician training programs and other health professionals. Continued support for this program will greatly increase the number of health care providers and strengthen the primary care workforce, and will begin to address the critical shortage of primary care physicians, particularly in rural communities, where many of our institutions are located, and throughout the nation.

The Teaching Health Centers

The Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) Program is the first of its kind to shift GME training to community-based care settings that emphasize primary care and prevention. It is uniquely positioned to provide much needed primary care training in underserved populations. As you know, 11 THCs received funding, including three osteopathic programs in New York, Texas, and West Virginia.

### Title VII

The health professions education programs, authorized under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act and administered through HRSA, support the training and education of health practitioners to enhance the supply, diversity, and distribution of the health care workforce, acting as an essential part of the health care safety net and filling the gaps in the supply of health professionals not met by traditional market forces.

### National Center for Workforce Analysis

The National Center for Health Workforce Analysis, created by the Affordable Care Act, will collect and analyze health workforce data and maintain a database of Title VII grants, along with longitudinal performance data. This Center will be critical in providing clear and concise information in regard to the growing health professions and physician workforce shortages and will supply our member institutions with a comprehensive data set that can be utilized for a broad range of purposes.

### 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, the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) supports the recruitment and retention of primary care clinicians to practice in underserved communities. While osteopathic medical students comprise just under 20 percent of all U.S. medical students, this year they received 40 percent of the NHSC scholarships awarded to all medical students (DO and MD).

AACOM appreciates the investment in these programs and would like to ask for continued support for and prioritization of these important programs. Thank you for your commitment and support, and AACOM looks forward to working together to help meet the demand for a well-trained, diverse workforce.

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