



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF  
COLLEGES OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

August 18, 2011

Dear Member of Congress:

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, ***we respectfully urge you to explore fiscally responsible ways to sustain funding for graduate medical education (GME) and oppose any cuts to this vital funding.***

With Congress' work and the creation of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction and the work it will undertake, AACOM recognizes the unique opportunity for finding common ground. We also recognize the opportunity for Congress to explore areas of reform and therefore, create a more fiscally sound nation. However, during this critical time, we ask that you strongly consider the importance of physician training to the health care system in both the short-term and the long-term and the critical care of the patients it serves.

As you know, Medicare provides the principal funding for the training of medical residents. Reducing this funding in any way will have a detrimental impact on hospitals with teaching programs for physician residents and on those who rely on them for care. These programs currently receive approximately \$9.5 billion annually, which is used to fund an insufficient number of residency slots each year. Cutting funding for GME programs would result in still fewer future physicians being trained and, as a result, fewer patients being treated. Evidence shows that because residents often begin their medical careers in a geographical location near where they trained, fewer local physician residents could result in fewer local primary care physicians.

Today, more than 19,000 students are enrolled in osteopathic medical schools. Nearly one in five U.S. medical students are training to be an osteopathic physician. It is important to note that many current osteopathic medical students will pursue careers in primary care and many will practice in rural and underserved areas; the areas that already face shortages of primary care providers. The number of osteopathic medical school graduates is growing and is expected to continue to rise in response to physician workforce shortages that exist and are projected to increase over the next five to 15 years. However, without appropriate GME funding, this growth will be stifled with serious implications for access to health care for your constituents.

As Congress and the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction continue to work, AACOM looks forward to collaborating with you to find a fiscally responsible path towards reducing our nation's deficit as well as finding common ground on exploring more efficient use of the funds that are available. However, AACOM believes decreasing funding for osteopathic physician training would jeopardize the nation's health and would further exacerbate the impending physician workforce

5550 Friendship Boulevard  
Suite 310  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815-7231  
P 301.968.4142  
F 301.968.4101  
[www.aacom.org](http://www.aacom.org)

shortage this country faces. Therefore, I urge you to support graduate medical education and the health care system in which future osteopathic physicians will serve.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

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