



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

November 15, 2011

The Honorable Jeb Hensarling
Co-Chair, Joint Select Committee
on Deficit Reduction
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Co-Chair, Joint Select Committee
on Deficit Reduction
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Hensarling, Chairwoman Murray, and Members of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction:

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 strongly urge the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction as it finalizes its recommendations to Congress to sustain funding for graduate medical education (GME) and oppose any cuts to this vital funding.**

During these negotiations, we ask that you *seriously* consider the importance of physician training, including training of primary care physicians, for patient care and access in order to help meet the nation's growing health care demands. Our member institutions train large numbers of primary care physicians who ultimately practice in rural and underserved areas, treating patients most in need of a well-trained physician workforce.

As you know, Medicare provides the principal funding for the training of medical residents. Reducing this funding in any way will have a devastating impact on hospitals with teaching programs for physician residents and on those who rely on them for care. Decreasing funding for GME programs would result in still fewer future physicians being trained, and as a result, fewer patients being treated and would further worsen the physician workforce shortage our nation is currently facing. Evidence shows that because residents often begin their medical careers in a geographical location near where they trained, fewer local physician residents could reduce the already small supply of primary care physicians in those areas.

Today, more than 20,000 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 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

5550 Friendship Boulevard
Suite 310
Chevy Chase, MD 20815-7231
P 301.968.4142
F 301.968.4101
www.aacom.org

that exist and are projected to increase over the next five to fifteen years. However, without appropriate GME funding, this growth will be stifled with serious consequences for health care access for your constituents.

As the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction finalizes its work, AACOM respectfully urges you to find a fiscally sound approach in dealing with the nation's deficit and sustain funding for GME. AACOM believes decreasing funding in any way for osteopathic physician training would jeopardize the nation's health and access to patient care and would further exacerbate the physician workforce shortage.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if AACOM can be of assistance in providing you with information on this issue. Thank you for your attention to this critical 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

cc: The Honorable Max Baucus
The Honorable Xavier Becerra
The Honorable Dave Camp
The Honorable James Clyburn
The Honorable John Kerry
The Honorable Jon Kyl
The Honorable Rob Portman
The Honorable Pat Toomey
The Honorable Fred Upton
The Honorable Chris Van Hollen