**Purpose**

Increase funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for osteopathic research by Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (COMs) to further enhance critical research that will increase health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability.

**Background**

Osteopathic medicine plays a vital role in the nation’s healthcare system and is the fastest growing medical field according to the U.S. Bureau of Health Professions. Osteopathic medical schools currently educate nearly 34,000 physicians — 25 percent of all US medical students—at 60 teaching locations.

Congress included language in the FY 2022 omnibus appropriations bill acknowledging that increased access to research funding for the osteopathic profession will significantly bolster NIH’s capacity to support robust recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, address health disparities in rural and medically-underserved populations and advance research in primary care, prevention and treatment.

Congress directed the NIH to report on the status of funding to COMs and representation on advisory councils and study sections.

**COMs receive only 0.1% of NIH grants**, compared to 40% for MD institutions. There are **no DOs among the 3233 study section reviewers** (compared to 493 MDs), and **only one DO among the 462 National Advisory Council members** (compared to 213 MDs).

This historic **funding disparity** and underrepresentation weakens osteopathic medical research in core clinical areas and **disadvantages osteopathic medical students** for the best residencies because of the lack of access to research opportunities.

**Impact**

Congressional engagement is needed to encourage the NIH to:

- Establish a structured partnership with the osteopathic medical education community to create and execute a plan to increase NIH funding for COMs
- Create a program to incentivize principal investigators from COMs
- Consider opportunities to fund research projects that incorporate the osteopathic philosophy and osteopathic manipulative medicine
- Increase representation from the osteopathic profession on NIH National Advisory Councils and study sections

**AACOM Recommends**

Members of Congress sign on to the congressional letter led by Senator Martin Heinrich, Senator Roger Wicker and Representative Susie Lee to NIH Acting Director Lawrence Tabak in support of osteopathic research and representation.