



Osteopathic Medical Education Priorities for COVID-19 Response

Through the passage of the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act* (P.L. 116-136) and the *Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act* (P.L. 116-139), Congress has made meaningful strides to strengthen the economy, protect public health, and help stabilize our healthcare and higher education systems in response to COVID-19. However, the pandemic continues to ravage our country.

AACOM strongly urges Congress to support more targeted measures to help address current and future challenges faced by our osteopathic medical schools, students, residents, educators, and the larger healthcare and higher education communities. These measures include:

- **Prioritization and protection of our healthcare workforce's mental and behavioral health**
- **Debt and economic relief for frontline workers**
- **Expansion of the physician workforce**
- **Federal emergency relief funding for osteopathic medical schools**
- **Robust investment in national public health infrastructure**
- **Funding for rural hospitals and physician practices impacted by the pandemic**
- **Funding for federal research agencies**
- **Pandemic-focused liability protections to safeguard our schools and students as they safely educate, train, and prepare the next generation of osteopathic physicians**

AACOM previously sent letters to Congress requesting [liability protections](#) outlining our [broad OME priorities](#) for the COVID response.

AACOM supports the following legislation in the 116th Congress:

Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act (S. 4349/ H.R. 8094)

The bill, introduced by U.S. Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA), Todd Young (R-IN), Jack Reed (D-RI), and Bill Cassidy (R-LA), would authorize Health Resources and Services Administration training grants for health professions students, residents, and professionals in evidence-informed strategies to mitigate suicide, burnout, substance use disorders, and other mental health conditions; require a comprehensive study on mental and behavioral health and burnout, including measuring COVID-19's impact on healthcare professionals' mental health; and establish a national education and awareness

campaign through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to encourage healthcare professionals to seek treatment.

Coronavirus Health Care Worker Wellness Act (H.R. 7255)

The bill, introduced by U.S. Representatives Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), John Katko (R-NY), and Frederica Wilson (D-FL), would provide mental health resources for frontline healthcare workers and authorize research to investigate the immediate mental health impacts caused by COVID-19, as well as the underlying causes contributing to burnout and other mental health issues experienced by healthcare workers.

Ensuring Understanding of COVID-19 to Protect Public Health Act (S. 3595/H.R. 6701)

The bill, introduced by U.S. Senators Jacky Rosen (D-NV) and Marco Rubio (R-FL) and U.S. Representatives Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Michael Burgess (R-TX), Diana DeGette (D-CO), and Brett Guthrie (R-KY), would expand our evidence-based understanding of the short- and long-term impacts of COVID-19 across diverse patient populations. The measure would instruct the National Institutes of Health, in conjunction with the CDC, to conduct a longitudinal study on the full effects of COVID-19 and would require frequent public reports of the study's findings.

Opportunities for Heroes Act (H.R. 6699)

The bill, introduced by U.S. Representatives Ann McLane Kuster (D-NH) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), would recognize the crucial role that first responders and essential employees, including healthcare professionals, play in delivering vital services and care to communities across the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. The measure would provide \$25,000 in student loan debt relief or education credit to these essential employees and their family members as they help the country respond to the current health emergency.

Student Loan Forgiveness for Frontline Health Workers Act (H.R. 6720)

The bill, introduced by U.S. Representatives Carolyn Maloney, Steven Cohen (D-TN), Jahana Hayes (D-CT), Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Marc Veasey (D-TX), Jesús G. "Chuy" Garía (D-IL), Derek Kilmer (D-WA), Juan Vargas (D-CA), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), and Yvette D. Clarke (D-NY), would establish a federal and private loan forgiveness program for loans acquired to receive medical and professional training held by healthcare workers who have made significant contributions to COVID-19 patient care, medical research, testing, and enhancing the capacity of the healthcare system to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Addressing COVID-19 Health Disparities Act (H.R. 8067)

The bill, introduced by U.S. Representatives Don Beyer (D-VA), Terri Sewell (D-AL), Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), and Debbie Dingell (D-MI), would direct the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality to conduct or support research on the most critical health system issues related to COVID-19, including

the expansion and effectiveness of telehealth, contributing factors and mitigation strategies for addressing racial and ethnic disparities in COVID-19 infection rates, and widespread access to COVID-19 vaccines, particularly for vulnerable groups.

Paycheck Protection Program Extension Act (S. 3833)

The bill, introduced by U.S. Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL), Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), Susan Collins (R-ME), and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), would extend and increase flexibility for the Paycheck Protection Program, which was established by the *CARES Act* to provide loans for small businesses. This measure would provide additional time for small business employers to use loan funds, allowing for the purchase of personal protective equipment and adaptive investments needed to reopen safely.

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