AACOM Advocacy Day 2023
Talking Points and Background

The Fair Access In Residency (FAIR) Act (H.R. 751)

AACOM Request

- Senate: Introduce a Senate companion bill for the Fair Access In Residency (FAIR) Act (H.R. 751).
- House: Cosponsor the Fair Access In Residency (FAIR) Act (H.R. 751) to ensure parity for DOs in residency programs that receive federal GME funding.

Talking Points

- Osteopathic medical schools educate 25% of all U.S. medical students.
- However, too many federally-funded residency programs frequently exclude or impose costly and burdensome requirements on DOs.
- These practices exacerbate the physician shortage by creating barriers and limiting access to training for DOs.
- 32% of Residency Program Directors said that they never or seldom interview DO seniors. (NRMP Program Directors Survey, 2022)
  - Interviews are required to obtain a residency.
- Of the residency directors that do interview DOs, 56% require them to take the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE), the MD exam. (NRMP Program Directors Survey, 2022)
  - DO students are required to take the COMLEX-USA for graduation and licensure.
  - COMLEX-USA is equivalent to the USMLE. According to the Federation of State Medical Boards of the United States Special Committee on Licensing Examinations, “the USMLE and the COMLEX-USA are valid for their stated purposes.”
  - The American Medical Association promotes equality in GME for DOs and MDs, including equal acceptance of the COMLEX and USMLE at all U.S. residency programs. (AMA)
  - DOs students spend an additional $2,235 and 32 hours of exam time per student to take the USMLE test. This does not include the costs of prep courses or the study time required to prepare for the additional exam.
- Residency training was consolidated under a single accreditor, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, for all residency and fellowship programs in 2020.
- Graduating DO and MD seniors enter a “single match” and compete for acceptance into these programs.
- 53% of DOs took the USMLE In the 22-23 exam cycle. (USMLE)
- There has been 65% increase in the number of DOs taking the USMLE since the start of the transition to single accreditation. (USMLE)
- Since single accreditation:
  - The percentage of DOs matching to their preferred surgical specialties has declined.
• DOs comprise 10% or less in major medical specialties. (2021 AAMC Resident Report)
• 63% of DOs entering the Match in 2023 said they experienced bias because of their degree.
• Medicare accounts for 71% of all GME funding. Taxpayer funded GME should not be used to exclude or place undue burdens on a class of licensed physicians based solely on degree type.
• Residency locations impact physician distribution.
  o 73% of osteopathic medical students will practice in the state where they do residency training
  o 86% of OMS who attend medical school and do residency training in a state will practice in that state
  o 57% of DOs practice in primary care (including family medicine, internal medicine, and pediatrics) (AOA). Osteopathic physicians tend to fill the primary care needs of rural communities at a rate 2.3 to 2.5 times higher than our allopathic colleagues.
  o In 2023, 55.9% of matched U.S. DO seniors went into primary care, compared to only 36.2% of U.S. MD seniors. (NRMP)
• DOs and MDs are equal in quality and cost of patient care. An Annals of Internal Medicine study showed no clinically important differences in mortality, readmission, length of stay, and healthcare spending between the two groups.

AACOM Policy Solution

• AACOM requests you sponsor (SENATE) or cosponsor (HOUSE) the Fair Access In Residency (FAIR) Act (H.R. 751) to ensure parity for DOs in residency programs that receive federal GME funding.

What the FAIR Act Does

The FAIR Act has two requirements of Medicare-funded GME programs, as a condition of participation:
• Report annually on the number of osteopathic and allopathic applicants and accepted residents.
• Affirm that applications from DO and MD students will be accepted, as well as the COMLEX-USA and USMLE if an exam score is required.
Program directors currently report annually to CMS and others on a number of things, so compliance requires minimal effort. The legislation establishes no quotas nor mandates that residency programs have DOs; it simply requires programs to give consider DO applicants.

Championed by Reps. Harshbarger (R-TN), Pingree (D-ME) Graves (R-MO) and Golden (D-ME), H.R. 751 strengthens the physician pipeline, supports equitable treatment of DOs and increases access to high-quality, patient-centered healthcare.