

March 5, 2021

The Honorable Raul Ruiz
U.S. House of Representatives
2342 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Ruiz:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), thank you for your unwavering commitment and leadership in championing the Health Resources and Services Administration's Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) Program by introducing H.R. 949, the *Expanding Teaching Health Centers Act of 2021*. We offer our strong support of this legislation.

AACOM leads and advocates for the full continuum of osteopathic medical education (OME) to improve the health of the public. Founded in 1898 to support and assist the nation's osteopathic medical schools, AACOM represents all 37 accredited colleges of osteopathic medicine (COMs)—educating nearly 31,000 future physicians, 25 percent of all U.S. medical students—at 58 teaching locations in 33 U.S. states, as well as osteopathic graduate medical education professionals and trainees at U.S. medical centers, hospitals, clinics, and health systems.

The OME community commends your introduction of H.R. 949, to support this critical program which produces primary care physicians in medically underserved communities across our country by providing enhanced funding for new centers and programs, new residency slots at existing Teaching Health Centers (THCs), an increase in the Per Resident Allocation from the level first set in 2011, and development grants for THCs.

Established in 2010, the THCGME Program has been a notable success. In the 2020-2021 academic year, the program funds the training of 769 residents in 60 primary care residency programs, across 25 states. Since 2011, the program has supported the training of over 1,148 new primary care physicians and dentists that have graduated and entered the workforce. Importantly, physicians trained in THC programs are more likely to practice in underserved communities, increasing access to care for the country's most vulnerable patient populations.

As you know, the continuation and expansion of this program is vital to addressing primary care physician workforce shortages and delivering health care services to vulnerable patients in need. It has encouraged greater connections and services between traditionally underserved areas and the emerging physician workforce by creating opportunities for osteopathic medical students to carry out their required training where their services are most needed. The THCGME Program has been highly effective in transitioning residents into high-need communities, with 65 percent

of physicians and dentists currently practicing in a primary care setting and 50 percent currently in a medically underserved or rural area. THC residents play a vital role in treating both COVID and non-COVID patients. However, significant financial losses caused by the pandemic increasingly threaten THCs' stability and ability to train future physicians who care for rural and medically underserved communities. The *Expanding Teaching Health Centers Act of 2021* would help THCs meet economic challenges caused by the pandemic and support additional expansion to underserved areas that face severe shortages of primary care physicians.

On behalf of the OME community, thank you for your steadfast leadership. I look forward to continuing our work together to support a healthcare system that will enable future osteopathic physicians to provide primary healthcare to the patients they serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert A. Cain, DO". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Robert A. Cain, DO, FACOI, FAODME
President and CEO