

Testimony of Robert A. Cain, DO, FACOI, FAODME
President and Chief Executive Officer
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
Concerning the Department of Health and Human Services
Submitted for the Record to the Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health & Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
June 13, 2025

The American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) appreciates the opportunity to highlight priorities for the osteopathic medical education (OME) community in the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHSE) fiscal year (FY) 2026 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) budget. AACOM supports FY26 funding levels for the following priority programs:

- \$51.303 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- \$11.581 billion for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- \$10.5 billion in discretionary funding the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
- \$1.51 billion for the Public Health Service Act Title VII and Title VIII Health Professions Workforce Programs including:
 - Loan Repayment and Faculty Fellowships
 - Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students
 - Health Careers Opportunity Program
 - Primary Care Training and Enhancement
 - Medical Student Education
 - Area Health Education Centers
 - Geriatric Programs
 - Public Health and Preventative Medicine
- \$500 million for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
- \$385 million for the Children's Hospital Graduate Medical Education Program
- A multi-year reauthorization with at least \$300 million per year for the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education Program
- \$915.6 million for National Health Service Corps Scholarship and Loan Programs
- \$50.5 million for the Medical Student Education Program
- \$59 million for the Primary Care Training and Enhancement Program
- \$47 million for the Area Health Education Center Program
- \$10 million for the Health Care Workforce Innovation Program
- Permanent funding for the Rural Residency Planning and Development Program

The AACOM leads and advocates for osteopathic medical education to improve the health of the public. Founded in 1898 by the nation's osteopathic medical schools, AACOM represents all 43 colleges of osteopathic medicine (COMs) — educating more than 38,000 future physicians, close to 30 percent of all US medical students — at 69 medical school campuses, as well as osteopathic graduate medical education professionals and trainees at US medical centers, hospitals, clinics and health systems.

NIH Funding and Representation for Osteopathic Medicine

AACOM urges the LHHSE Subcommittee to direct the NIH to increase engagement with osteopathic medical education leaders and create a plan to increase research and representation from colleges of osteopathic medicine.

AACOM is concerned that scientists at osteopathic medical schools continue to be underutilized in NIH research and underrepresented on NIH Advisory Councils and study sections. These concerns and the need for a remediation plan have been repeatedly highlighted in report language in the FY22, FY23, FY24, and FY25 omnibus appropriations bills and two bipartisan, bicameral congressional letters to the NIH Director from July 2022 and September 2024.

AACOM appreciates the LHHSE Subcommittee's actions to increase osteopathic research funding and representation and recognizes a new NIH Director offers an opportunity for progress. We urge the subcommittee to keep a focus on this issue and encourage the new NIH leadership to engage with osteopathic medicine. The challenge is both acute and enduring. As we've noted, despite training nearly one-third of all U.S. medical students, COMs receive just 0.1% (\$55.6 million) of NIH funding, compared to 42% (\$23.8 billion) for MD-granting institutions. Representation is similarly lacking: only 3 DOs serve among the 462 National Advisory Council members (compared to 213 MDs), and just 19 DOs are among the 3,233 NIH study section reviewers (versus 493 MDs).

Past NIH leadership has ignored congressional requests for progress on this issue and we are optimistic that new leadership will be more responsive. By neglecting osteopathic research, the NIH is missing opportunities to bolster its capacity to address some of the Nation's most pressing healthcare needs, particularly in primary care and rural health. **To emphasize the importance of this issue and encourage more direct engagement, AACOM requests that the LHHSE Subcommittee include stronger report language in its FY26 report urging the NIH to establish and execute a plan to increase research and representation from colleges of osteopathic medicine.**

AACOM appreciates the opportunity to share our LHHSE FY26 funding priorities and looks forward to continuing to work with the Subcommittee on these important

matters. For questions or further information, please contact David Bergman, JD, Senior Vice President of Government Relations and Health Affairs, at dbergman@aacom.org.