

January 26th, 2026

The Honorable Nicole Kleinstreuer, Ph.D.
Acting Deputy Director
Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Re: Proposed Reorganization, New Offices within DPCPSI: Commentary from AACOM

Dear Acting Deputy Director Kleinstreuer:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the National Institutes of Health's proposed reorganization and creation of new offices within the Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives (DPCPSI). AACOM supports NIH's effort to expand its organizational structure and strengthen coordination, evaluation, and translational impact across the agency. **As part of this initiative, AACOM respectfully urges the agency to also establish an Office of Osteopathic Research or comparable entity within the NIH institutional framework.**

Since 1898, AACOM has served as the leading voice for the education and training of physicians who practice osteopathic medicine. Osteopathic medicine represents a whole-person, patient-centered approach to the practice of medicine. AACOM leads and advocates for the osteopathic medical education (OME) community to improve the health of the public. Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (COMs) currently educate more than 38,000 future physicians—nearly 30 percent of all US medical students—at 73 medical school campuses. AACOM also represents osteopathic graduate medical education professionals and trainees at affiliated medical centers, hospitals, clinics, and health systems nationwide. Our institutions are uniquely positioned to bolster research in the areas of primary care, rural health and chronic disease to improve the health of our communities.

Osteopathic medical schools train future physicians across the country who are dedicated to the critical role of advancing primary care, rural health, and whole-person approaches to preventative care. More than half of colleges of osteopathic medicine

(COMs) are located in Health Professional Shortage Areas, and nearly 40 percent of physicians who practice in medically underserved areas are DOs. As such, osteopathic physicians offer a unique voice and perspective to the medical research community. However, COMs remain significantly underrepresented in NIH-funded research, receiving only 0.1 percent ([\\$64 million](#)) of NIH funding compared to 42 percent ([\\$22.5 billion](#)) for allopathic/MD institutions. This leaves critical areas of health care underexplored.

Consistent with your statement that NIH must “deliver results that matter to the public” and align priorities and funding approaches accordingly, **AACOM believes the establishment of an Office of Osteopathic Research would advance this commitment.** Such an office would help ensure that NIH’s research portfolio reflects the settings and populations where care is most often delivered, particularly in local communities, rural and underserved environments. Such an office could serve as a focal point for coordination, technical assistance, and engagement with osteopathic researchers, while advancing NIH priorities to expand the nation’s medical science knowledge base and strengthen economic well-being.

AACOM believes that NIH’s proposed reorganization presents a timely opportunity to formally recognize and integrate osteopathic research perspectives within the agency’s structure. We welcome the opportunity to engage further with NIH leadership to discuss how an Office of Osteopathic Research could be structured to support NIH’s mission of enhancing scientific excellence and innovation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share our views and for your continued leadership in strengthening the nation’s biomedical research enterprise.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David M. Bergman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

David Bergman, JD
Senior Vice President of Government Relations and Health Affairs