



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

December 6, 2012

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Reid, Leader McConnell, Speaker Boehner, and Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), I am writing to strongly urge you to pursue a balanced approach to our nation's deficit while seeking alternatives to sequestration, and to oppose any proposal that would be harmful to medical education, health care research, or public health programs that are vital to the nation's health care system and to patients across the country. AACOM represents the nation's 29 colleges of osteopathic medicine at 37 locations in 28 states. Today, more than 21,000 students are enrolled in osteopathic medical schools. One in five U.S. medical students is training to become an osteopathic physician.

The United States leads the world in medical education and in biomedical and health research, as a result of a model system of public sector support and private sector ingenuity. For example, a strong program of public support for graduate medical education (GME) is absolutely critical for training the next generation of osteopathic physicians, who will be called upon to treat patients in an increasingly complex medical environment – with approximately 32 million additional individuals projected to enter the health care system over the next few years.

AACOM's member institutions train significant numbers of primary care physicians who ultimately practice in rural and underserved areas, treating patients who are most in need of a well-trained physician workforce. As you know, Medicare provides the principal funding for the training of medical residents. Reducing this funding in any way will have an adverse impact on hospitals with teaching programs for physician residents and on the patients who rely on them for care. Cutting funding for GME programs would result in still fewer future physicians being trained; as a result, fewer patients being treated would further worsen the physician workforce shortage our nation is currently facing.

5550 Friendship Boulevard
Suite 310
Chevy Chase, MD 20815-7231
P 301.968.4142
F 301.968.4101
www.aacom.org

The National Institutes of Health (NIH), to which many colleges of osteopathic medicine apply for research funding, is unrivaled in spurring the clinical discoveries that lay the path for private sector innovation. Peer-reviewed NIH funding is distributed among all 50 states and congressional districts, stimulating further discovery at universities, hospitals, small businesses, and independent research institutes. In fact, NIH-supported research has:

- Supported nearly 500,000 jobs in 2011 in every state.
- Generated \$62 billion in economic activity in 2011.
- Helped increase life expectancy from 47 years in 1900 to 78 years in 2009.

The primary care programs at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the National Health Service Corps (NHSC), and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) all provide a positive return on investment to our nation, protecting American lives and promoting American prosperity.

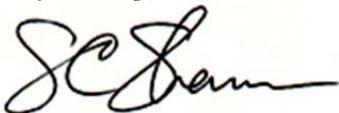
- HRSA's Title VII programs provide critical training opportunities for primary care physicians and other health professionals and help to extend the reach of medical care into rural and urban underserved areas, addressing key populations that critically need quality care;
- The NHSC is a well-established program that provides medical care for underserved populations in exchange for offering financial support to primary care providers;
- AHRQ combats entrenched problems in our nation's health care system – like preventable medical errors and administrative red tape – that take lives and inflate the cost of taxpayer and privately funded health programs.

Disinvesting from medical education and research – and the infrastructure and expertise needed to conduct it – would contradict the goal of deficit reduction. Health care is one of the fundamental underpinnings of our economy, a reality well understood by other nations, which are ramping up their investments in their nations and building up their research infrastructures.

When it comes to the fiscal health of our nation, medical education and research are part of the solution – they are absolutely not part of the problem. Whether it is appropriations policy or entitlement and tax reform, I urge you to reject any proposal that cuts funding or hinders public- and private-sector supported medical education and research.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter vital to our nation's osteopathic medical schools and the future physicians they train.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Shannon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Stephen C. Shannon, DO, MPH
President and CEO