

February 24, 2017

The Honorable Karen Bass
United States House of Representatives
2241 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Bass:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), I offer support for the *Student Loan Fairness Act*. Thank you for your strong commitment and leadership in introducing this critical legislation to help alleviate the federal student loan debt burden confronting osteopathic medical students and graduates.

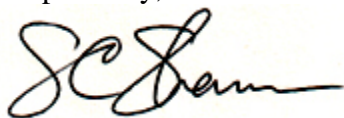
AACOM represents the 33 accredited colleges of osteopathic medicine in the United States. These colleges are accredited to deliver instruction at 48 teaching locations in 31 states. Six of the colleges are publicly controlled, 27 are private institutions. In the 2015-16 academic year, colleges are educating nearly 26,000 future physicians—more than 20 percent of U.S. medical students.

We recognize the substantial burden of both undergraduate and graduate debt confronting osteopathic medical students and graduates, and we support policies such as the *Student Loan Fairness Act* that is designed to help these students afford their education by lowering interest rates on all federal student loans, supporting public service opportunities tied to physician workforce needs, and expanding loan consolidation options.

With recent graduates of osteopathic medical schools reporting mean debt levels of approximately \$230,000 and preexisting undergraduate debt further compounding the problem for medical students, this legislation will help alleviate the significant debt medical students accrue overtime. Concurrently, interest continues to accumulate as graduate student loan debt increases, which considerably magnifies the overall cost to borrowers. In addition, many osteopathic medical graduates intend to pursue primary care specialties. However, without meaningful relief for their student loan debt, these students may pursue more lucrative areas of practice, further exacerbating the primary care workforce shortage.

On behalf of AACOM, I offer our support of the *Student Loan Fairness Act*, and I thank you for your commitment to and leadership on this important effort to make education more affordable for our nation's future physician workforce. As the 115th Congress continues its work, I look forward to working together on this critical matter.

Respectfully,



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