



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

May 10, 2012

The Honorable Allyson Y. Schwartz
U.S. House of Representatives
1227 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joe Heck, DO
U.S. House of Representatives
132 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Schwartz and Representative Heck:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), which represents the nation's colleges of osteopathic medicine and their osteopathic physicians in training, I offer support for the *Medicare Physician Payment Innovation Act of 2012*. Thank you for your leadership in introducing this important legislation, which would repeal the Medicare sustainable growth rate (SGR) put in place by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 and incentivize high quality, high value care.

AACOM represents the administrations, faculty, and students of the nation's osteopathic colleges and schools which offer the doctor of osteopathic medicine (DO) degree. Beginning in fall 2013 there will be 29 colleges of osteopathic medicine, offering instruction at 37 locations in 28 states. Today, more than 20,000 medical students are enrolled in osteopathic medical schools. More than 20 percent of new U.S. medical students are training to be osteopathic physicians. By 2019, that number is expected to grow to 25 percent.

While AACOM is abundantly aware of the challenges Congress faces in dealing with the nation's fiscal situation and existing budget constraints, AACOM believes your efforts in working to address a long-term solution to the Medicare SGR and supporting physicians is to be applauded. As educators of future osteopathic physicians, we support policies, including the *Medicare Physician Payment Innovation Act of 2012*, which work to ensure an adequately trained workforce that meets the needs of the 21st century. This is particularly important at a time when the number of osteopathic medical school graduates is growing and is expected to continue to grow in response to physician workforce shortages that exist and/or are projected over the next five to 15 years. Furthermore, many current osteopathic medical students will pursue careers in primary care, and many will practice in rural and underserved areas; these are the geographical areas that already face shortages of primary care providers.

On behalf of AACOM, I offer our support for the *Medicare Physician Payment Innovation Act of 2012*, and I thank you for your commitment and strong leadership on working to support a health care system that will enable current osteopathic medical students and future osteopathic physicians provide high quality care to the patients they serve.

Respectfully,

Stephen C. Shannon, D.O., M.P.H.
President and CEO

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