

May 17, 2012

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Denny Rehberg
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Shelby and Chairman Rehberg and Ranking Member DeLauro:

I am writing on behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), which represents the administrations, faculty, and students of the nation's osteopathic colleges 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. I respectfully urge you to support funding for primary care training and for the National Health Care Workforce Commission in the FY 2013 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill. Funding for physician training is an investment in the future restraint of health care spending, as well as in improved health outcomes.

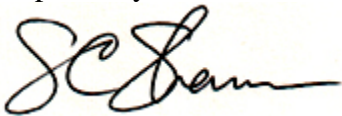
AACOM understands that you will continue to have to make difficult determinations regarding federal spending this year. However, the importance of supporting and enhancing the primary care workforce to ensure access to quality and cost-effective health care must be an integral part of the discussion. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Title VII health professions programs, including the Primary Care Training and Enhancement Program, are a small investment that will reap larger rewards. **For this reason, AACOM strongly recommends that the primary care training program be funded at \$58 million. This level of funding would assure the continuation of current grants while providing funding for a full competitive grant cycle, which is needed to sustain the program.**

Numerous studies and reports from independent sources as varied as the Council on Graduate Medical Education, the Institute of Medicine, the Congressional Research Service, and others have stressed that a stronger primary care workforce is essential to controlling healthcare costs, while assuring access to high-quality treatment and prevention services. Preserving funding is critical to supporting primary care training and education as well as sustaining and growing the primary care workforce. The HRSA primary care training programs are vital to osteopathic medical schools to provide support to enhance clinical teaching and research as well as increase interdisciplinary recruitment, training, and faculty development.

As the United States seeks to address physician shortages, particularly in rural and underserved areas, our country lacks a defined policy to address these critical issues. The National Health Care Workforce Commission was designed to develop and evaluate training activities to meet the demand for health care workers. Without a modest amount of funding, the Commission cannot identify barriers that may create and exacerbate workforce shortages and improve coordination on the federal, state and local levels. This entity has become more critical as more Americans have insurance coverage and the population ages, requiring increased access to care. Guidance from this Commission will also ensure that the primary care training funds are being spent in areas where they can have the greatest impact. **For these reasons, AACOM strongly recommends that \$3 million be appropriated to fund the Commission.**

As the FY 2013 appropriations process moves forward, please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance or provide further information about these important programs critical to our citizens as well as the nation's colleges of osteopathic medicine and their students.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "SC Shannon", written over a light yellow rectangular background.

Stephen C. Shannon, DO, MPH
President and CEO