



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

December 19, 2016

The Honorable Michael R. Pence
Vice President-Elect
Presidential Transition Headquarters
1800 F Street, NW
Room G117
Washington, DC 20270-0117

Dear Vice President-Elect Pence:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), I write to request that national health care policies that strongly support osteopathic medical education and the future physician workforce be thoroughly considered during and beyond the Administration's transition.

AACOM represents the 33 colleges of osteopathic medical schools in the United States. These colleges are accredited to deliver instruction at 48 teaching locations in 31 states. Six of the colleges are public and 27 are private institutions. In the 2015-2016 academic year, these colleges educated over 26,100 the training of physicians—more than 20 percent of all U.S. medical students.

As osteopathic medical schools continue to grow in number, which significantly impacts the nation's health care and medical education systems, AACOM looks forward to working with the incoming Administration to promote robust health care policies that foster osteopathic medical education and the training of osteopathic physicians.

As you know, the U.S. health care system faces numerous challenges: ongoing transformation, a rapidly evolving and diverse patient population, a physician workforce shortage that is projected to worsen over the coming years, and the rising number of medical school graduates facing a finite number of residency slots. Federal graduate medical education (GME) funding is critical to ensure that the nation's medical residency training programs that produce future licensed physicians to care for the nation's patient population progress, and is on a stable and continuing trajectory, particularly as the physician workforce shortage is expected to subsist. We request that the incoming Administration champion health care policies that support the investment and preservation of federal GME funding to include removal of the statutory cap on Medicare-funded GME slots as well as ensuring policies impacting GME funding are directly associated with health care workforce needs, particularly for programs that expand training in community-based settings in high-need communities.

Office of Government Relations
500 New Jersey Avenue NW
Suite 380
Washington, DC 20001-2005
www.aacom.org

In addition, we strongly support the expansion and sustainability of GME positions at the Department of Veterans Affairs' medical facilities created by the *Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014*.

Furthermore, we request that as the incoming Administration continues to develop its health care platform, it fully consider policies that support the long-term sustainment of the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Teaching Health Center (THC) GME Program. As you know, the THCGME Program, which was reauthorized in *The Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015* (MACRA), aims to address the nation's primary care workforce shortage and expand training opportunities for future physicians by funding primary care medical and dental residents in community-based settings. According to HRSA, physicians who train in THCs are three times more likely to work in such centers and more than twice as likely to work in underserved areas. In 2015, 66 percent of the residents who completed the THCGME Program continued to practice in the states where they were residents. Continuation for this program is critical to addressing the primary care physician workforce shortage, while delivering health care services to underserved communities most in need.

AACOM strongly supports federal health care workforce policies intended to ensure an adequately-trained physician workforce to meet the health care needs in the 21st century. We request support for the following workforce programs:

- HRSA's Title VII health professions education and workforce training programs, specifically the Primary Care Training and Enhancement Program, Area Health Education Centers, and the Faculty Loan Repayment Program. These programs have been vital to the growth of osteopathic medical education and primary care training; the programs benefit the health care system far beyond their modest costs.
- Federal investment in the National Health Service Corps to help recruit and retain primary care physicians and other health care professionals in geographical areas in need.
- Innovative expansion of inter-professional practice and team-based programs that provide resources for the implementation and evaluation of inter-professional training models to deliver efficient, high-quality patient care.
- Health care workforce data production, analysis, and oversight to ensure that investments in the future of health care appropriately address the areas of greatest need.

As osteopathic medical education continues to grow across the country, AACOM believes that more research must be devoted to analyzing this practice modality, and supports fully integrating osteopathic medicine into the nation's research infrastructure. Investment in and increased funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and in NIH's National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health to expand a full spectrum of research on osteopathic manipulative medicine, from basic to applied research to investigate and assess its efficiency, should be supported. Furthermore, we strongly support the work of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and expanding programs at AHRQ that evaluate quality of care, promote knowledge transfer, and fund patient-centered outcomes research (PCOR). Additionally, continuing support for PCOR, implemented by the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), and prioritization by PCORI of resources to train osteopathic researchers remains a priority. And lastly, we ask the Administration to support research by the Center for Medicare & Medicaid

Innovation, AHRQ, and other agencies to explore innovation in methods of physician training and health care delivery.

AACOM looks forward to working with the new Administration to join together to build a health care system that will enable current osteopathic medical students and future osteopathic physicians to provide the necessary care to the nation's patient populations. If you have any questions or wish to discuss these matters further, please contact Pamela Murphy, Senior Vice President of Government Relations, at pmurphy@aacom.org or (301) 908-2137.

Respectfully,

Stephen C. Shannon, DO, MPH
President and CEO