



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

July 24, 2012

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Norman D. Dicks
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Dicks:

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, **in strong opposition to the fiscal year (FY) 2013 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill as reported by the subcommittee last week.**

AACOM understands that you will have to make extremely difficult decisions regarding federal spending this year in working toward a more balanced approach to deal with the nation's deficit; however, we urge you to consider the detrimental impact of eliminating and further cutting programs of critical necessity to colleges of osteopathic medicine, the students they train, and the patients they serve. Of greatest concern to AACOM is the elimination of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and the Title VII health professions programs – the Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Program; Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students (SDS) Program; and the Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP).

AACOM also has strong concerns with the bill's overall funding cuts to the Health Research and Services Administration (HRSA), which is funded \$453 million below the FY12 appropriated level and \$315 million below the President's FY13 budget request; health professions training also faces an enormous cut of \$137 million below the FY12 level. Although AACOM believes in the importance of a fiscally sound approach to our nation's deficit, we do not believe it should be at the expense of programs vital to medical education and physicians in training. These cuts will further exacerbate the physician workforce shortage and hurt the communities where health care access and treatment is needed most critically.

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

AHRQ supports research to improve health care quality, reduce costs, advance patient safety, decrease medical errors, and broaden access to essential services. AHRQ plays an important role in producing the evidence base needed to improve our nation's health and health care system. To fulfill AHRQ's mission and broader research agenda, especially research in patient safety and

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prevention and care management research, continual investment is needed. Eliminating AHRQ will have enormous detrimental implications to health care safety, quality, and efficiency. Also deeply concerning is the bill's ban on AHRQ's patient-centered outcomes research, which informs health care decision-making by comparing evidence on the effectiveness, benefits and harms of different treatment options. Osteopathic medical schools and their students continue to benefit from this research.

Title VII Programs

AACOM has serious concerns with the elimination of the AHEC Program, Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students (SDS) Program, and Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP). The AHEC Program provides funding for interdisciplinary, community-based, primary care training programs. Through a collaboration of medical schools and academic centers, a network of community-based leaders work to improve the distribution, diversity, supply, and quality of health personnel, particularly primary care personnel in the health care services delivery system, specifically in rural and underserved areas. Many osteopathic medical schools partner with AHECs to increase primary care services in many underserved and rural communities and value this partnership as a vital component to provide quality patient care to those in most need.

The SDS Program works to increase access to health professions for disadvantaged and minority students. Colleges of osteopathic medicine have a long established history and have continually set the precedent in graduating students who go on to practice in primary care and medically underserved communities. Furthermore, the SDS Program aligns directly with the mission and service of colleges of osteopathic medicine and their ongoing commitment to diversify the physician training workforce. AACOM wants to continue to ensure that access for osteopathic medical students to the SDS Program is not limited, but expanded. In addition, HCOP provides students from disadvantaged backgrounds an opportunity to develop the skills needed to successfully compete, enter, and graduate from the health professions field. It is the only federal program of its kind to prepare students for health professions education. Osteopathic medical schools have a long track record of producing primary care physicians who practice in our nation's most underserved areas and this program allows substantial expansion and critical additions to continue a pipeline with retention programs.

National Institutes of Health

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is funded at \$30.6 billion, well below the allocation in the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education appropriations bill and mandates many restrictive provisions on research. Specifically, it requires the Director of NIH to maintain an allocation of at least 55 percent of aggregate funding based solely on basic sciences activity, which undermines NIH's ability to provide grants based on scientific opportunity. Research funded by the NIH leads to important medical discoveries regarding the causes, treatments, and cures for common and rare diseases as well as disease prevention. These efforts improve our nation's health and save lives. To maintain a robust research agenda, sound investment is needed. In today's increasingly demanding and evolving medical curriculum, there is a critical need for more research geared toward evidence-based osteopathic medicine. AACOM believes that it is vitally important to maintain and increase funding for biomedical and clinical research in a variety of areas related to osteopathic principles and practice, including osteopathic

manipulative medicine and patient-centered outcomes research and that any restrictions on research will harm these efforts.

As the FY 2013 appropriations process moves forward, AACOM urges you to oppose the elimination of and devastating cuts to the aforementioned programs, which are extremely vital to patient care as well as to the nation's colleges of osteopathic medicine and the future physician workforce.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "SC Shannon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "SC" being particularly prominent.

Stephen C. Shannon, DO, MPH
President and CEO

cc: Members of the House Committee on Appropriations