



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

January 27, 2014

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
United States Senate
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Sanders:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), I offer strong support for the Teaching Health Center Reauthorization Act. Thank you for your commitment and leadership in introducing this vital legislation, which aims to address the nation's physician workforce shortage, and expand opportunities for future physicians training in primary care to meet the growing health care needs across the country, particularly in certain rural and urban areas with medically underserved populations.

AACOM represents the administrations, faculty, and students of the nation's osteopathic medical schools, which offer the doctor of osteopathic medicine (D.O.) degree. There are 30 colleges of osteopathic medicine at 40 locations in 28 states. Today, more than 23,000 students are enrolled at osteopathic medical schools, and more than 20 percent of new medical students in the United States are training to be osteopathic physicians.

As you know, osteopathic medical residency programs have greatly benefited from the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) Program. Hand-in-hand with osteopathic medical education's (OME) historically staunch commitment to train future primary care physicians, many current osteopathic medical students will pursue careers in primary care and many will practice in rural and underserved areas, which already face shortages of primary care providers. Germane to OME's longstanding commitment and efforts to train future primary care physicians has been the THCGME Program's success. As you know, this program serves as an innovative training model which enables primary care residents to train in the communities where there is an unmet need for patient health care.

Sustainability for the THCGME Program is critical to addressing physician workforce needs; this program has strong potential to increase the number of primary care physicians that serve the communities most in need. Therefore, this legislation is vital to support these future physicians and the communities they serve.

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On behalf of AACOM, I offer our strong support for the Teaching Health Center Reauthorization Act, and I thank you for your steadfast leadership and dedication to working to support a health care system that will enable future osteopathic physicians to provide critical primary care services.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "SC Shannon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

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