



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

April 11, 2014

The Honorable Matt Salmon
U.S. House of Representatives
2349 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Salmon:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), I offer support for the *Advancing Competency-Based Education Demonstration Project Act of 2013*. Thank you for your strong commitment and leadership in introducing this legislation that would increase innovation in delivering quality education. We strongly support policies that promote creating sound learning measurements and assessment tools based on student's work and progress while at the same time lowering the cost of education.

Today, more than 23,000 students are enrolled at osteopathic medical schools, and 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. AACOM recognizes the significant undergraduate and graduate debt burden so many osteopathic medical school students graduate with, and we continue to support policies and programs, including the *Advancing Competency-Based Education Demonstration Project Act of 2013* that would help ease the strain of educational debt for students at the same time create innovative and sound learning opportunities.

Over a 13-year period from 2000 to 2013, self-reported average osteopathic medical education debt of graduates who borrowed to attend medical school increased alarmingly, with the average in 2013 being \$211,423. Concurrently, as osteopathic medical education debt surges, interest accrues on these loans over time, which considerably inflates the overall cost of student debt. Students are also entering medical school with more educational debt from their undergraduate education. Furthermore, as such measures would help lessen the weight of educational debt, many osteopathic medical students would be further encouraged to continue the trend of training and practicing in primary care, an area that continues to face a physician workforce shortage.

On behalf of AACOM, I offer our support of the *Advancing Competency-Based Education Demonstration Project Act of 2013*, and I thank you for your commitment to and leadership on this important effort to make quality higher education more innovative and affordable for our nation's osteopathic medical students. I look forward to working together on this important matter.

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Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "SC Shannon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

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