



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF  
COLLEGES OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

November 2, 2012

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), which represents the nation's 29 colleges of osteopathic medicine, offering the doctor of osteopathic medicine (DO) degree at 37 locations in 28 states, I respectfully request that you strongly consider the devastating impact of the automatic across-the-board cuts mandated in the Budget Control Act of 2011 and explore every option available to seek alternatives to implementation.

The osteopathic medical education community is fully aware of the dire fiscal situation our nation is facing and that hard choices must be made to return our country to sound fiscal footing. While these important fiscal concerns must be addressed, it is critical that we ensure that the programs that will help return this country to fiscal stability are preserved.

As you know, in 2013, sequestration will mean an automatic 2 percent reduction in Medicare and an 8.2 percent cut to program funding levels in most non-defense discretionary programs. These cuts will truly be across-the-board, with no departmental or agency control over how the sequester impacts individual programs. Cuts of this level will be extremely devastating to our nation's osteopathic medical schools and the future physicians they train, and by extension, to patient care throughout the nation. To be specific about the far-reaching extent of the damage these cuts will have:

Cuts to Medicare will result in \$123 billion less in spending over the next 10 years. That will have an impact on physicians and the hospitals and health care centers in which they serve. We have major concerns that the impact of potential cuts to graduate medical education (GME) will be devastating to the physicians our schools train and the patients they serve. By reducing an already inadequately funded GME system, the pipeline for future physicians will be squeezed even tighter and the impact will be revealed in longer wait times for patients to see physicians, a more critical shortage of primary care physicians and certain specialties, and an overall reduction in the availability and quality of medical care.

Cuts to the health professions programs related to primary care training in the Health Services and Resources Administration (HRSA) will take an already insufficiently funded program and diminish it further. With 32 million new patients entering the health insurance system as a result of the enactment of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), this is a devastating time to cut resources and support for future physicians; as a result, these cuts will greatly impact patient care.

5550 Friendship Boulevard  
Suite 310  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815-7231  
P 301.968.4142  
F 301.968.4101  
[www.aacom.org](http://www.aacom.org)

Cuts to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) will stifle medical discoveries that save lives and help drive the nation's economy through well-paying technology jobs. NIH supports researchers in every state across the nation and in many colleges of osteopathic medicine (COMs) that AACOM represents. Every state will experience sequestration's impact. According to a study by United for Medical Research, in eight states, these cuts will exceed \$100 million annually.

Among the other programs of support to the osteopathic medical education community that will be cut by sequestration are community health centers, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the administrative staff responsible for paying Medicare and Medicaid claims, the Office of Rural Health Policy at HRSA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and virtually all of the programs at the United States Department of Education that provide necessary federal financial aid to osteopathic medical students.

We hear often that sequestration was never truly intended to take effect; that it was merely a tool to ensure the success of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction ("Super Committee"). Our nation is now faced with rapidly impending across-the-board funding cuts. The future of our country will be substantially impacted by the actions you and every member of Congress take between now and January 2, 2013. We respectfully urge you to join with your colleagues on Capitol Hill in taking a serious balanced approach to deficit reduction and avoiding sequestration.

Thank you for your consideration. AACOM stands willing and ready to work with Congress on this critical matter impacting our nation's osteopathic medical schools, the future physicians they train, and the patients they serve.

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 Chief Executive Officer