



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

December 13, 2012

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), I respectfully urge you to pursue a balanced approach to our nation's deficit while seeking alternatives to sequestration, and to strongly oppose any proposal that would be harmful to medical education and physician training, which are vital to the nation's health care system and to patients across the country. AACOM represents the nation's 29 colleges of osteopathic medicine at 37 locations in 28 states. Today, more than 21,000 students are enrolled in osteopathic medical schools. One in five U.S. medical students is training to become an osteopathic physician.

The medical education community is fully aware of the fiscal situation our nation is facing and understands that difficult choices need to be made to return the country to sound financial footing. In this process it is apparent that severe cuts to graduate medical education (GME) are being seriously considered. AACOM has grave concerns with any cuts to GME and continually advocates for a strong program of public support for GME, which is absolutely critical to train the next generation of osteopathic physicians. These physicians will be called upon to treat patients in an increasingly complex medical environment – with approximately 32 million additional individuals projected to enter the health care system over the next few years.

As you know, Medicare funding provides the principal financial resource for the training of medical residents. A well-trained physician workforce is essential to ensuring Americans have access to care. This is particularly true of the primary care workforce, where research has shown that access to primary care lowers costs and improves health outcomes. Adequate GME programs are necessary to assure that the U.S. health care system has a sufficient number of well-trained physicians to provide patients with high quality health care. Such support is particularly critical as we work together to transform the U.S. health care system to one that is patient-centered, team-based, and prevention-focused.

Many current osteopathic medical students will pursue careers in primary care and many will practice in rural and underserved areas; these are the areas that already face shortages of primary care providers. The number of osteopathic medical school graduates is growing and is expected to continue to rise in response to physician workforce shortages that exist and are projected to

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increase over the next five to 15 years. The contributions of the nation's osteopathic medical schools in educating the next generation of physicians is instrumental in helping to address the physician workforce shortage, and sufficient GME funding is absolutely essential to this training.

Cutting Medicare GME funding for physician training, which is used to fund an already insufficient number of residency slots each year, would result in fewer future physicians being trained and, ultimately, fewer patients being treated. We must increase, not decrease, physicians in medical residency training programs across the United States to ensure access to patient care.

As the Administration and Congress continue its negotiations, AACOM strongly urges you to find fiscally responsible ways to reduce our nation's deficit, but not at the detriment of medical education and physician training, and oppose any proposal that causes severe harm to the nation's health care delivery system, physicians in training, and the patients they serve.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

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