



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

April 30, 2013

The Honorable Karen Bass
U.S. House of Representatives
408 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Bass:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), I offer support for the *Student Loan Fairness Act*. Thank you for your strong commitment and leadership in introducing this vital legislation that would help alleviate the federal student loan debt burden, which so many osteopathic medical students and graduates struggle with every day.

Today, more than 21,000 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 *Student Loan Fairness Act*, designed to help those students better afford medical education by lowering interest rates on all federal student loans, supporting public service opportunities tied to physician workforce needs, and expanding loan consolidation options.

Over a 12-year period from 2000 to 2012, self-reported average osteopathic medical education debt of graduates who borrowed to attend medical school increased by an alarming 70 percent, with the average in 2012 being \$205,674. 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, many osteopathic medical students go on to train and practice in primary care, although medical students with high debt loads are less likely to pursue primary care specialties, further exacerbating the primary care workforce shortage.

On behalf of AACOM, I offer our support of the *Student Loan Fairness Act*, and I thank you for your commitment to and leadership on this important effort to make education more affordable for our nation's students and for working to decrease federal student loan debt for our nation's osteopathic medical students. As the 113th Congress continues its work, I look forward to working together on this critical matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "SC Shannon", written in a cursive style.

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

5550 Friendship Boulevard
Suite 310
Chevy Chase, MD 20815-7231
P 301.968.4142
F 301.968.4101
www.aacom.org