



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

April 27, 2012

The Honorable Hansen Clarke
U.S. House of Representatives
1319 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Clarke:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), I offer our strong support of H.R. 4170, the Student Loan Forgiveness Act of 2012. Thank you for your leadership in introducing this important legislation, which would help to alleviate the federal student loan debt burden, which so many osteopathic medical students and graduates struggle with every day.

Today, more than 20,000 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 osteopathic medical school students graduate with and we continue to support policies and programs, including H.R. 4170, designed to help those students better afford medical education through lowering interest rates on all federal student loans, supporting public service opportunities tied to physician workforce needs, and expanding loan consolidation options.

The self-reported average medical education debt of graduates of colleges of osteopathic medicine who borrowed to attend medical school increased from less than \$121,000 in 2000 to \$207,317 in 2011. Rising tuition costs are not the only cause of increasing debt loads. Interest accrued on loans over time significantly adds to the cost of student debt. Students are also entering medical school with more educational debt from their undergraduate education. Many osteopathic medical students go on to train and practice in primary care. However, medical students with high debt loads are less likely to pursue primary care specialties, further exacerbating the primary care shortage.

On behalf of AACOM, I offer our strong support of H.R. 4170, the Student Loan Forgiveness Act of 2012, and I thank you for your commitment and leadership on working 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. I look forward to working together on this important 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