

The Honorable Diana Harshbarger
U.S. House of Representatives
167 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
U.S. House of Representatives
2162 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves
U.S. House of Representatives
1135 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Harshbarger, Pingree and Graves,

Thank you for your on-going efforts to ensure parity in the Medicare graduate medical education (GME) program through the introduction of the *Fair Access in Residency (FAIR) Act*. This legislation will help ease the physician shortage, support equitable treatment of osteopathic medical students and increase access to high-quality, patient-centered healthcare in rural and underserved areas. The undersigned organizations strongly support the *FAIR Act*.

Medicare funds 71 percent of all GME. Yet too many federally funded programs exclude or impose burdensome requirements on doctors of osteopathic medicine (DOs), resulting in unjustifiable discriminatory treatment. According to a 2021 National Resident Matching Program survey, no less than 36 percent of residency program directors report never or seldom interviewing DO candidates. These biases are most pronounced in several medical specialties where DOs represent seven percent or fewer residents. Residency programs should not be allowed to use taxpayer dollars to discriminate against an entire class of physicians.

Moreover, 32 percent of residency programs mandate osteopathic medical students take the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE), which is the MD licensing exam. DO students take the Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination of the United States (COMLEX) for graduation and licensure. DO and MD requirements are parallel, with both medical exams leading to unrestricted physician licenses. The demands of medical school are exhausting and DO students shouldn't be subjected to the emotional and financial strain of a second exam, which is in excess of physician licensure requirements.

The *FAIR Act* requires federally funded GME programs to: (1) report annually the number of applicants for residency from allopathic and osteopathic medical schools and how many such applicants were accepted from each respective type of school and (2) affirm annually that they accept applicants from osteopathic and allopathic medical schools, and that if an examination score is required for acceptance, the COMLEX and USMLE will be equally accepted.

Osteopathic medicine is the fastest growing health profession in the United States and colleges of osteopathic medicine are now educating 25 percent of all medical students. DOs are meeting our nation's healthcare needs, prioritizing primary care specialties, and practicing in rural and underserved areas at notably high rates. Physician distribution is influenced by training location, and more than 73 percent of DOs practice in the state where they do their residency training.

Unnecessary and unfair residency criteria negatively impacts physician distribution leading to healthcare access deficiencies. The *FAIR Act* will help remove these barriers and strengthen the healthcare delivery system.

Thank you for your leadership on this critical issue. The undersigned organizations stand ready to work with you to advance the *FAIR Act*. For any questions, please contact Dave Bergman, JD, AACOM Vice President of Government Relations, at dbergman@aacom.org.

Signatories as of November 28, 2022

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine

Academy for Professionalism in Health Care
American Academy of Osteopathy
American College of Osteopathic Emergency Physicians
American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
American College of Osteopathic Internists
American College of Osteopathic Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American College of Osteopathic Pediatricians
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons – Medical Student Section
American Osteopathic Academy of Addiction Medicine
American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopedics
American Osteopathic Association of Prolotherapy Regenerative Medicine
American Osteopathic College of Anesthesiologists
American Osteopathic College of Dermatology
American Osteopathic College of Pathologists
American Osteopathic College of Radiology
American Osteopathic Colleges of Ophthalmology & Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery
American Geriatrics Society
Assembly of Osteopathic Graduate Medical Educators
Association of Osteopathic State Executive Directors
Benefis Health System
Council of Osteopathic Student Government Presidents
National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners
National Rural Health Association
Society of Osteopathic Specialty Executives
The Wright Center for Community Health
The Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education

STATE ORGANIZATIONS

Florida Osteopathic Medical Association
Georgia Osteopathic Medical Association
Idaho Osteopathic Physicians Association
Illinois Osteopathic Medical Society

Indiana Osteopathic Association
Indiana Rural Health Association
Iowa Osteopathic Medical Association
Maine Osteopathic Association
Mississippi Osteopathic Medical Association
Missouri Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons
Montana Osteopathic Medical Association
North Carolina Osteopathic Medical Association
Ohio Osteopathic Association
Osteopathic Physicians & Surgeons of California
Osteopathic Physicians & Surgeons of Oregon
Pennsylvania Osteopathic Medical Association
Tennessee Osteopathic Medical Association
Texas Osteopathic Medical Association
Texas Society of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
Virginia Osteopathic Medical Association
Washington Osteopathic Medical Association