

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 30, 2024

The Honorable Monica Bertagnolli

Director

National Institutes of Health

9000 Rockville Pike

Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Dr. Bertagnolli:

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to ensuring that the National Institutes of Health (NIH) delivers on its mission to improve the health of the American people through medical research. We write to strongly encourage increased representation of and investment in osteopathic medicine across the NIH enterprise.

As Members of Congress, we believe that Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (COMs) are integral to our nation's research infrastructure and are well-positioned to play a greater role in NIH clinical research. Fifty-six percent of COMs are located in Health Professional Shortage Areas, and 40 percent of COM graduating students commit to practicing in an underserved area, playing a critical role in serving rural and underserved communities across the country amidst widespread health care workforce shortages.

Osteopathic medical schools have received only 0.1 percent<sup>1</sup> of NIH grants compared to 40 percent<sup>2</sup> for allopathic schools in Fiscal Year 2024. Congress has repeatedly highlighted the need for increased funding for – and representation from – the osteopathic medical education (OME) community in committee and conference reports accompanying consolidated appropriations acts from Fiscal Years (FY) 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025. Twenty-six members of Congress also sent a letter to the Acting Director addressing this topic in July 2022. Despite encouraging the NIH to increase representation of the osteopathic medical community within its agency, no additional osteopathic physicians have been named to NIH National Advisory Councils despite many nominations.

We believe NIH is missing significant opportunities to collaborate with COMs and OME to advance research in primary care, address health disparities in rural and underserved communities, strengthen nonpharmacological treatments, and invest in other vital medical areas. Osteopathic medicine continues to be associated solely with complementary and integrative health, despite data demonstrating that osteopathic scientists participate in the full continuum of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://reporter.nih.gov/search/qcafPAmEH0i3aEijRPxLTg/projects/charts>

<sup>2</sup> <https://reporter.nih.gov/search/6vhXBo1GcE2cZkpaJBrcJg/projects/charts>

medical research. We encourage the NIH to expand funding opportunities for COMs to other NIH Institutes and Centers beyond just the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH).

As Members of Congress, we urge the NIH to prioritize this issue and establish a plan to increase osteopathic research funding and representation across the NIH enterprise. We recommend the following items be included in the plan:

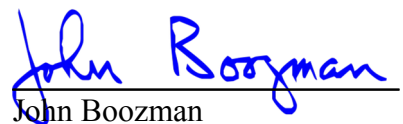
1. A strategy and timeline outlining specific steps the NIH will take to increase osteopathic research funding and representation.
2. A designated NIH staff contact for the osteopathic community within the Office of the Director.
3. A list of NIH Institute and Center programs that can immediately incorporate osteopathic representation, including CARE for Health, which focuses on primary care.
4. A process for engagement with the OME community that includes a meeting between the Director and AACOM CEO, as well as regular communication between AACOM and leaders from across Institutes and Centers to discuss progress on the plan.
5. Guidance for how the osteopathic community can increase representation on NIH National Advisory Councils and study sections, as well as specific feedback on unselected nominees.
6. A briefing for Members of Congress on how NIH is responding to this letter and other congressional requests.

We encourage you, your staff, and Institute and Center leadership to seriously consider the concerns and recommendations outlined in this letter. We thank you for your attention to this important matter and look forward to learning more about your efforts to advance more inclusive funding and representation opportunities for osteopathic medicine.

Sincerely,



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



John Boozman  
United States Senator



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Susie Lee  
Member of Congress



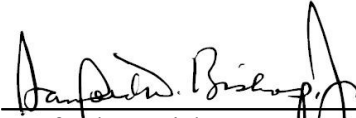
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Julia Letlow, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress



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Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress



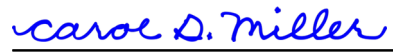
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Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Robert B. Aderholt  
Member of Congress



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Carol D. Miller  
Member of Congress



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James Lankford  
United States Senator



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John Joyce, M.D.  
Member of Congress



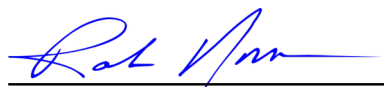
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James E. Risch  
United States Senator



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Mike Crapo  
United States Senator



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Ralph Norman  
Member of Congress



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Sam Graves  
Member of Congress



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John Garamendi  
Member of Congress



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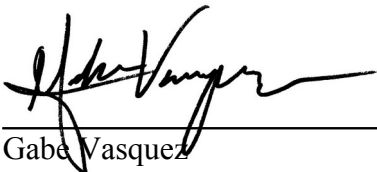
Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress



Patrick K. Ryan  
Member of Congress



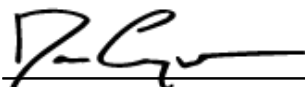
Troy E. Nehls  
Member of Congress



Gabe Vasquez  
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



Dan Crenshaw  
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



Tim Burchett  
Member of Congress



Ben Cline  
Member of Congress



Mike Kelly  
Member of Congress



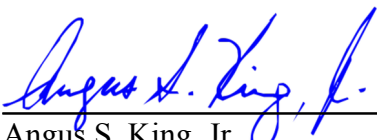
Steve Womack  
Member of Congress



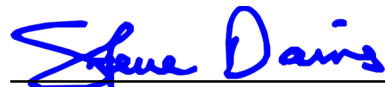
Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator



Marsha Blackburn  
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator



Steve Daines  
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



Mike Rogers  
Member of Congress



Bob Good  
Member of Congress



H. Morgan Griffith  
Member of Congress



Andy Kim  
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress



John Kennedy  
United States Senator