

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
2354 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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

The Honorable Jared Golden
U.S. House of Representatives
710 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Harshbarger, Pingree, Graves and Golden,

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 2022 National Resident Matching Program survey, no less than 32 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, at least 56 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 December 2, 2024

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

Baptist Health Science University System

Baptist Memorial Health Care Corporation

Benefis Health System

Council of Osteopathic Student Government Presidents

National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners

National Hispanic Health Foundation

National Rural Health Association

Society of Osteopathic Specialty Executives

The Wright Center for Community Health

The Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education

STATE ORGANIZATIONS

Alabama Osteopathic Medical Association

Arizona Osteopathic Medical Association
Arkansas Osteopathic Medical Association
Colorado Society of Osteopathic Medicine
Connecticut Osteopathic Medical Society
Delaware State Osteopathic Medical Society
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
Kansas Association of Osteopathic Medicine
Louisiana Osteopathic Medical Association
Maine Osteopathic Association
Maryland Association of Osteopathic Physicians
Michigan Osteopathic Association
Mississippi Osteopathic Medical Association
Missouri Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons
Montana Osteopathic Medical Association
Nebraska Osteopathic Medical Association
New Jersey Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons
New Mexico 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
Rhode Island Society of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons
South Carolina Osteopathic Medical Society
Southwest Virginia Graduate Medical Education Consortium
Tennessee Osteopathic Medical Association
Texas Osteopathic Medical Association
Texas Society of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
Utah Osteopathic Medical Association
Virginia Osteopathic Medical Association
Virginia Rural Health Association
Washington Osteopathic Medical Association
Washington State Medical Association
West Virginia Osteopathic Medical Association
Wisconsin Association of Osteopathic Physicians & Surgeons