



AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION

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May 1, 2017

The Honorable Joseph Crowley  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1035 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ryan Costello  
U.S. House of Representatives  
326 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Crowley and Costello:

On behalf of the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) and the nearly 130,000 osteopathic physicians and osteopathic medical students we represent, we thank you for introducing the “Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2017.” We applaud your leadership and strongly support your efforts to provide teaching hospitals the flexibility to train a greater number of physicians which will help address the physician shortages in many of our states and the Veterans Health Administration.

Numerous academic and advisory bodies, including the Council on Graduate Medical Education (COGME), have issued reports showing that there will be an inadequate number of physicians to meet patient demands by the year 2025. This shortage of physicians comes at a time when the nation’s senior population and the number of Medicare beneficiaries are growing at a rapid rate. While the precise number of physicians needed to fill the existing and projected gaps is yet to be determined, there is little doubt that the nation’s current graduate medical education system limits our ability to meet our future physician workforce needs.

Since the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, teaching hospitals have been prohibited from increasing the number of resident physicians trained in their institutions. Communities that are experiencing or have experienced rapid population growth face limited access to physician services as a result. Furthermore, since a majority of graduate medical education occurs in a small percentage of states and most resident physicians practice in communities near the geographic location of their training, many states have an inherently limited ability to meet their future physician workforce needs.

Your legislation focuses on states and communities that face the greatest need, including emphasizing the importance of community-based training and programs with a rural focus. We believe this is an appropriate approach that will be a major factor in addressing our nation’s overall physician workforce needs. As osteopathic physicians are educated, trained, and practice in urban and rural areas alike, the osteopathic profession is likewise committed to meeting the health care needs of our country.

Again, thank you for your steadfast leadership on this issue. The AOA and our members stand ready to assist you in securing the enactment of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Boyd R. Buser" followed by a stylized flourish.

Boyd R. Buser, DO  
President