



AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION

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July 27, 2017

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
U.S. House of Representatives
1314 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Niki Tsongas
U.S. House of Representatives
1714 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives McMorris Rodgers and Tsongas:

On behalf of the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) and the nearly 130,000 osteopathic physicians and osteopathic medical students we represent, thank you for introducing the “Training the Next Generation of Primary Care Doctors Act of 2017” (H.R. 3394). This important bipartisan legislation renews the commitment to the continued development of the Teaching Health Centers Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) program to help ensure a robust primary care workforce in our nation’s rural and underserved communities. We are grateful for your leadership on this critical issue.

The THCGME program is a vital source of training for primary care residents to help expand access to care in rural and underserved communities throughout the country. These programs, located in 59 teaching health centers in 27 states, currently train 742 residents in much-needed primary care fields including family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, psychiatry, geriatrics, and dentistry. The majority of these programs are accredited by the AOA or are dually accredited (DO/MD) programs, supporting nearly 800 osteopathic resident physicians through their training since the program began. And true to the intent of the THCGME program, residents who train in these programs are far more likely to practice primary care and remain in the communities in which they have trained.

As osteopathic physicians, we are trained in a patient-centered, hands-on approach to care that focuses on the whole person, including the physical, mental, and psychosocial aspects of health. Our training and philosophy includes a strong emphasis on primary care – in fact, approximately half of all osteopathic physicians practice in primary care specialties. Given this strong presence in primary care, osteopathic medicine aligns naturally with the mission and goals of the THCGME program that has proven successful in helping address the existing gaps in our nation’s primary care workforce.

Your legislation provides much-needed stability through continued funding for the THCGME program, and also creates a pathway for the expansion of existing centers as well as the creation of entirely new teaching health centers. We deeply appreciate your commitment to training the future of the primary care workforce and thank you for introducing this important legislation. The AOA and our members stand ready to assist you in securing its enactment into law.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Baker, DO
President