July 27, 2016

The Honorable Ricardo Lara  
Chairman  
California State Senate Appropriations Committee  
State Capitol, Room 5050  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chairman Lara:

The American Osteopathic Association (AOA) and the Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons of California (OPSC) are writing to encourage you to support AB 2216. This bill would establish the Teaching Health Center Primary Care Graduate Medical Education Fund for the purpose of funding primary care residency programs. The AOA and OPSC believe that providing greater support for residency training programs is an excellent way to address physician workforce shortage concerns and enhance patient access to high quality health care.

The AOA represents more than 123,000 osteopathic physicians (DOs) and osteopathic medical students, promotes public health, encourages scientific research, serves as the primary certifying body for DOs and is the accrediting agency for osteopathic medical schools. More information on DOs/osteopathic medicine can be found at www.osteopathic.org. OPSC is a professional organization that represents over 6,000 DOs providing patient care in California. Greater than 50% of DOs practice in primary care specialties, and the osteopathic medical profession has long emphasized the importance of providing care to patients in rural and underserved areas. A disproportionate amount of osteopathic physicians provide services in these areas when compared to other professionals. While DOs make up 11% of all US physicians, they are responsible for 16% of patient visits in communities with populations of fewer than 2,500. Overall, 40% of all physicians that are located in medically underserved areas or treat medically underserved populations are osteopathic physicians.

This commitment by the osteopathic medical profession to provide health care in rural communities is reflected by the osteopathic medical schools located in the state. California is home to Touro University California, College of Osteopathic Medicine (TUCOM) and to Western University of Health Sciences, College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific (WesternU/COMP). Over 100 osteopathic medical students recently graduated from TUCOM and matched into primary care residencies, allowing them to begin postgraduate medical training with the goal of filling physician

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1 Osteopathic Medicine and Medical Education in Brief, American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine. Available at: http://www.aacom.org/about/osteomed/Pages/default.aspx.
2 2013 National Center for the Analysis of Healthcare Data (NCAHD)’s Enhanced State Licensure
shortages. In 2015, 60% of osteopathic medical students from WesternU/COMP matched into an internal medicine, family medicine, or pediatric residency training program.

Currently, only 16 of California’s 58 counties have the recommended supply of primary care physicians. Additionally, nearly 30% of the state’s physicians are near retirement age. Providing additional funding for graduate medical education residency programs in underserved areas is an excellent incentive to attract physicians to provide patient care in those areas, and ultimately increase the number of physicians in the state.

We urge you to promote access to quality care for all California patients by supporting AB 2216. Should you need any additional information, please feel free to contact Nick Schilligo, MS, Associate Vice President, State Government Affairs at nschilligo@osteopathic.org or (800) 621-1773, ext. 8185.

Sincerely,

Boyd R. Buser, DO
President, AOA

Abraham Pera, DO
President, OPSC

CC:  Mark A. Baker, DO, AOA President-elect
Joseph Giaimo, DO, Chair, AOA Department of Governmental Affairs
Michael Murphy, DO, Chair, AOA Bureau of State Government Affairs
Adrienne White-Faines, MPA, AOA Chief Executive Officer
Ray Quintero, Senior Vice President, AOA Public Policy
Nicholas Schilligo, MS, Associate Vice President, AOA, State Government Affairs
Kathleen Creason, Executive Director, OPSC

3 Garcia, Andrea. “Touro University California Hits Record Match Rate into Primary Care.” Touro University, May 9, 2014. Available at: http://externalrelations.tu.edu/media/pressrelease/050914_matchday.html
5 Id.