



## Purpose

**Federally-funded graduate medical education (GME) programs frequently exclude or impose burdensome requirements on Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine (DOs).** These practices exacerbate the workforce shortage by limiting access to licensed DO physicians. Congressional action is needed to ensure DOs have equal access to Medicare-funded residency programs and the nation is leveraging all available physicians to support access to healthcare.

## Background

Osteopathic medical students attend Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine and take the Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination of the United States (COMLEX-USA) for state licensure and acceptance to residency programs. COMLEX-USA is equivalent to the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) taken by allopathic students (MDs). **The American Medical Association promotes equality in GME for DOs and MDs, including equal acceptance of the COMLEX and USMLE at all U.S. residency programs.**

In 2020, residency training for physicians was consolidated under a single accreditor, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. Graduating DO and MD seniors now enter a “single match” and compete for acceptance into these residency programs where they will train for the next three to seven years, depending on medical specialty.

DO and MD requirements are parallel, both leading to unrestricted physician licenses. Residency training is required for licensure and supported through government-funded GME. Medicare accounts for 71% of all GME funding. **However, 9% of residency program directors never interview DOs and 27% seldom do. Moreover, a third of GME programs impose costly and burdensome requirements on DO students applying to residency, like mandating the USMLE.** Taxpayer funded GME programs should ensure fair consideration of residency applications from DOs and MDs.

## Impact

Congressional action is needed to end restrictive practices against DOs for federally-funded GME because:

- DOs play a critical role in addressing the physician workforce shortage with **more than 73% of DOs practicing in the state where they do residency training**
- **36%** of residency programs **seldom or never interview DOs**
- **32%** of residencies, more than 1,700 programs, **only accept the USMLE**
- DO students spend over **\$6 million** a year on the USMLE
- DO students incur significant financial and emotional hardship to prepare for an examination that is not designed for the osteopathic profession or necessary for licensure

### AACOM Recommends

Enact legislation ensuring that federally-funded GME residency programs consider osteopathic medical graduates.

## About AACOM

The American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) leads and advocates for the full continuum of osteopathic medical education to improve the health of the public. Founded in 1898 to support and assist the nation's osteopathic medical schools, AACOM represents all 38 colleges of osteopathic medicine—educating nearly 34,000 future physicians, 25 percent of all U.S. medical students—at 60 teaching locations in 34 U.S. states, as well as osteopathic graduate medical education professionals and trainees at U.S. medical centers, hospitals, clinics and health systems. **For more information, please contact David Bergman, Vice President of Government Relations, [dbergman@aacom.org](mailto:dbergman@aacom.org) (301) 968-4174.**