



AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION

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May 5, 2016

The Honorable Hank Johnson  
United States House of Representatives  
2240 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Johnson:

On behalf of the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) and the more than 123,000 osteopathic physicians and osteopathic medical students we represent, thank you for introducing the Battlefield Excellence through Superior Training (BEST) Practices Act (H.R. 1095). Your bipartisan legislation will help the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) transition away from animal-based medical training, ensuring that medical personnel in the Armed Forces are trained using human-based medical training methods in order to help protect our men and women in uniform.

Osteopathic medicine is an ever-advancing field, and innovative new medical training tools and devices help provide students with realistic, clinically-relevant training informed by the most current medical knowledge. While some medical training methods have relied upon the use of animals, especially live tissue training for trauma injuries, significant advances in medical research and training techniques offer osteopathic medical students with interactive training opportunities that translate more directly to actual human patients. In fact, many osteopathic medical schools have task trainers and sophisticated human simulation labs that provide students with a controlled, realistic, and clinically-relevant environment that promotes greater learning and skill development.

Your legislation will help the DoD eventually phase out the use of animals in live tissue training for combat trauma injuries and move toward human-based training methods, many of which are already commonly used in civilian medical education. We recognize and appreciate concerns by some that eliminating live tissue trauma training would have a negative impact on the quality of care for traumatic injuries; however, with the current level of sophistication of human-based simulation and continual improvement of these technologies, transitioning away from animal-based training without compromising care – or soldiers' lives – is an achievable reality. This bill will ensure that medical personnel in the Armed Forces receive training through humane methods, and most importantly, are equipped with the critical knowledge and appropriate training to provide the highest possible level of care for the men and women who bravely serve our country – goals shared by the osteopathic medical profession.

Thank you again for introducing this important legislation. The AOA and our members stand ready to assist you in securing its enactment into law.

Sincerely,

John W. Becher, DO  
President