



**Meritus School of Osteopathic Medicine**

11116 Medical Campus Rd

Hagerstown, MD 21742

301.790.8000

February 6, 2025

Dear Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

I am writing to express strong support for Senate Bill 597, which seeks to expand eligibility for the Maryland Graduate and Professional Scholarship Program to include students attending the Meritus School of Osteopathic Medicine (MSOM). As the Chief Operating Officer of MSOM, I urge you to pass this crucial legislation that will benefit Maryland residents pursuing medical education within our state.

**Equity for Maryland Students**

The current exclusion of MSOM from the scholarship program creates a potential disincentive for Maryland citizens to choose to attend this Maryland institution. Without this change, our students cannot access the same financial benefits available to their peers at other Maryland medical. This disparity penalizes Maryland residents with high financial need who wish to pursue their medical education at MSOM, potentially forcing them to seek education out-of-state.

**Financial Relief for Students, Not the Institution**

It is important to emphasize that MSOM does not stand to profit from this change. Our institution will receive the same tuition regardless of whether this bill passes. The sole beneficiaries of this legislation are the residents of Maryland - our students - who will receive this much-needed financial relief.

**Estimated Impact**

To provide context on the potential impact of this legislation:

- Our goal is to attract as many Marylanders as possible to our program.
- Currently, 30% of our accepted students are in-state residents.
- When fully rolled out, our total class size will be 180 students.
- Therefore, we anticipate approximately 60 in-state students per year in the long term.
- Of these 60 students, we expect a proportional number to be eligible for this student aid, comparable to other medical colleges in Maryland.

**Investing in Maryland's Future Healthcare Workforce**

Passing SB 597 is an investment in the future of healthcare in Maryland. By providing equal access to financial aid for MSOM students, we can:

1. Encourage more Maryland residents to pursue medical education within the state
2. Reduce the financial burden on our future physicians
3. Increase the likelihood that these students will remain in Maryland to practice after graduation

In conclusion, I strongly urge you to support Senate Bill 597. This legislation will level the playing field for Maryland residents choosing to attend MSOM, provide crucial financial support to our students, and ultimately contribute to a stronger healthcare workforce for our state. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave Lehr".

Dave Lehr

Chief Operating Officer

Meritus School of Osteopathic Medicine