

Good afternoon, everyone!

It's truly an honor to welcome you to Chan Soon-Shiong Medical Center at Windber as we celebrate a milestone that marks the beginning of something extraordinary—the formal signing of a clinical affiliation agreement between our rural hospital and Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Proposed College of Osteopathic Medicine. This moment is incredibly meaningful to me—not just as a physician, but as someone who grew up right here in this region. For those of you who don't know, I grew up in little Bedford, PA, just a short drive from where we are standing today. And like many kids from small towns, I grew up with lofty dreams but limited exposure to what was possible in the world of medicine.

It wasn't always easy to imagine myself in a white coat. But I had extended family and developed a local community of individuals along the way who believed in me. I discovered osteopathic medicine and found a path that resonated deeply with who I am—a philosophy centered on treating the whole person, building relationships, and making a meaningful impact in the lives of patients and communities each and every day. Becoming a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine didn't just give me a career—it gave me purpose.

Now, as the Physician Medical Director of the Emergency Department here at CSSMCW, I have the privilege of serving the kind of community I came from—and unfortunately, I see significant patient needs every day. I see patients who struggle to find care close to home, I see rural hospitals with resources stretched thin, and I see how desperately we need a new generation of physicians who understand these concerns and are ready to stand up and meet these challenges. That's why today's partnership is so important. The Proposed College of Osteopathic Medicine at IUP—**the first** at a public university in Pennsylvania—isn't just a school - **It's a mission**. It's a direct response to the growing shortage of healthcare providers in rural and underserved areas. It's a commitment to training DO's who are equipped with not just clinical skills - but empathy, humility, and a passion for service.

This college will offer hands-on experience, a community-focused curriculum, and a holistic approach to care—values that align perfectly with both osteopathic principles and the mission of this hospital. Through this partnership, students will gain real-world clinical experience right here at CSS Medical Center at Windber, preparing them to make a lasting difference in communities just like ours. In addition, the ripple effects will go far beyond healthcare. This initiative will bring new jobs, new talent, and new energy to our region. It will uplift our economy, enrich our communities, and inspire young people—just like I once was—to believe that a future in medicine is not only possible, but within reach.

I want to thank Drs. Miko Rose and Ryan Smith, the other Deans, and the IUP leadership team for their vision, determination, and commitment to this mission. And I want to thank our dedicated leadership team here at CSS Medical Center at Windber for helping to bring this partnership to life. As someone who has walked this road—from a small-town kid in a classroom, to a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine—I can say with certainty: this is a turning point

- for our region, for our youth, for our friends and families, and for the future of rural healthcare in Pennsylvania.

And now, it is my true privilege to introduce the person who will be leading our organization into this exciting and bright new chapter. Please join me in welcoming Windber Hospital's new Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Richard Sukenik.