

Good afternoon.

Thank you for coming out today for this signing. It is another significant step in the progress of IUP's proposed college of osteopathic medicine. This is the 14th signing agreement we have made with a medical facility, and we are grateful for it.

Thank you to everyone at the Chan Soon-Shiong Medical Center for your hospitality and willingness to join us in taking on Pennsylvania's rural health crisis.

The good folks here in Windber will be excellent partners as we work together to find creative new ways to serve rural patients.

So, why a college of osteopathic medicine at IUP?

And why collaborate with the Chan Soon-Shiong Medical Center?

Those are easy to answer.

Everyone here knows there is a crisis in Pennsylvania, and communities like Windber are in the heart of it. Too many rural residents need medical care, and there are too few medical professionals to provide it. This forces many people to travel long distances for the most basic healthcare needs.

The Association of American Medical Colleges projects a shortage of up to 124,000 physicians in the United States by 2034, including 48,000 in primary care.¹

So, you see, there is a demand and not enough supply.

Although technically in Somerset County, Windber borders Cambria County, and patients from both counties seek treatment here at this medical center.

We know that senior citizens and people experiencing poverty are the populations that need medical care the most.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 1 in 4 residents of Somerset and Cambria counties is age 65 or over, and 13 percent of all residents in these two counties live in poverty.²

Studies have shown that graduates of medical schools in rural areas are statistically more likely to go on to practice medicine in rural areas.

¹ [How these health system leaders are addressing doctor shortages](#), American Medical Association, Feb. 13, 2025

² [Somerset County Quick Facts](#), census.gov (Note: Cambria County has similar statistics, so the two are combined in one paragraph).

So, it's clear that IUP's proposed college of osteopathic medicine would help address our region's critical need for medical professionals. And that would be a welcome thing in places like Windber.

I toured this facility a few months ago and was impressed with the level of care provided and the means by which it is delivered. I'm impressed with your thoughtful approach to helping patients who may not have the means to travel to receive medical care.

They face the kinds of challenges we've been talking about as we work to help our communities get more and better health care.

They face the kinds challenges we hope to help address by creating a college of osteopathic medicine at IUP.

We have a lot of work yet to do before we welcome our first class of students — which we are tentatively scheduling for the fall of 2027 — but we are continually gaining momentum.

We appreciate the support of the good people in Windber and Somerset County, Cambria County, and everyone at the Chan Soon-Shiong Medical Center.

Thanks again for coming out today and to everyone who had a hand in putting this agreement together.