



Chairman Greenlick, Vice-Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice-Chair Thompson, Members of the Health Care Committee,

My name is Robert Luchsinger and I am a second year osteopathic medical student at Western University of Health Sciences in Lebanon, Oregon. I speak on behalf of the Student Osteopathic Medical Association, representing the osteopathic medical students of Oregon, in opposition to HB 2902. I currently reside in Lebanon with my wife, who is expecting our first child next week, while attending medical school.

Since the inception of osteopathic medicine on the plains of the Midwest in the late 1800's, osteopathic physicians have always been dedicated to providing primary care, especially in rural locations. For the reasons listed above, we feel that physicians are a vital part of providing primary care, but this bill will provide significant barriers that will prevent future physicians from pursuing careers in primary care.

HB 2902 would require insurers to reimburse nurse practitioners and physician assistants at the same rate as physicians for the provision of the same primary care and mental health services. Mandating that Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants be reimbursed at the same rate as physicians will discourage students like us from considering careers in primary care. Though our extra time of training provides us with great skills to serve our patients, it also comes at a great financial cost. Most of us will be graduating with on average \$350,000 of educational debt. HB 2902 simply requires that physicians and nurse practitioners be paid at the same level; it does not specify what that level should be. While there is a chance that this bill would allow nurse practitioners to elevate their pay level to that of a physician, there is also the distinct possibility that physician pay could decrease to what is currently paid to a nurse practitioner. This would make it unaffordable for us future physicians to maintain a private practice, malpractice insurance, finance our student loan payments, and support our families. We feel it is unacceptable for the Oregon Legislature to enact laws that will make it more difficult to provide desperately needed primary care.

I, like many of my classmates, grew up in a small town and excited to provide health care in a rural setting. While the spirit of this bill is to increase access to health care in rural counties like Linn and Benton where we live, work, and attend school, the way in which this bill is written provides the wrong solution to the problem and could prevent Oregonians from receiving medical assistance from well trained, highly experienced providers. We strongly urge you to oppose House Bill 2902. Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.