

Name: Alicia Hart

Date: 2/13/19

Subject: Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians Pay Parity Bill

Dear Senate and Health Care Committees,

I am an ND working as a primary care physician in Tualatin. My practice is heavily skewed to caring for Medicaid patients who require more time and care management than most MD and DO offices are able to provide, and I love what I do. The way that my education has prepared me to offer alternatives is essential for true wellness, and I've been collaborating with MDs and DOs to help insure greater health for folks for years.

As an extremely traditional "I've wanted to be a doctor since I was 5" premed, I ran through med school at the same time as friends who went to conventional medical schools. I promise that we shared notes and studied together, that our exams were similar. There are some differences in training but I find that those differences tend to be positives- I can function in a far lower resource setting than many of my friends while maintaining good clinical outcomes. I listen more than they are able to. I have better training on diet and lifestyle change than they do, which is critical for primary care.

With the current "tiered" healthcare system that refuses to acknowledge me as a primary doc, I repeatedly run into draining red-tape hoops to jump through that impair patient care. Some examples of that from this 6 weeks of the new year alone include:

- Having to physically go to the TRACU with snacks and business cards and essentially bribe the floor staff physicians into releasing records to me that I needed to maintain medications for a patient they were discharging
- Having to chapter and verse state law to a home health nursing coordinator who insisted that I couldn't sign the home health nursing orders and wanted to talk to my supervising MD or force a patient to change physicians post surgery that my office did all of the investigative work and referrals for.
- Having a physician in the hospital refuse to talk to me about a patient I sent in because I "wasn't a real doctor"
- Having every hospitalist group in town refuse to even meet to talk about setting up referral relationships

While these experiences are not consistent with the medical field as a whole, allowing insurance to treat me as a second class citizen certainly reinforces to these institutions commitment to making care harder to access in a time when we desperately need good family doctors.

I routinely outperform some of my conventional colleagues, and my patients and community will tell you that. When it comes to reversing diabetes, helping anxious moms, giving vaccines to a vaccine hesitant

population, and working with women's issues in particular, I know that what I am doing for our community is essential and that the care given is better than what patients are receiving elsewhere. I cannot tell you how many times a patient has said to me "well no one ever asked that before" or "no one did that exam before" or "no one ever looked at me as a whole person before". People sometimes have the impression that only healthy people seek NDs, but far more typically I see people that tried 6 other doctors who weren't sure what was wrong with them and started getting better with me.

I love my MD and DO colleagues and I know that they're doing the best that they can in the system that they're in. I refer frequently and often, and work collaboratively with many doctors here, nationally, and internationally. In no way do I want you to take the above as an adversarial relationship- I want you to think about how we can make care coordination better. How we, together, can reduce barriers to care: like insurance credentialing me as a "specialist" in family practice to make referrals harder to give; or insurance not reimbursing me for the same work which makes my bottom line not sustainable and will push harder on making folks either go to concierge care to survive, etc.

Together we can make a difference and improve health care for Oregon. Our state already has NDs filling the gap for Medicaid. Help us help our communities. Please vote yes on the Naturopathic Physician Pay Parity bill.

Sincerely,

Alicia Hart, ND