

Dr. Amanda Watters
National University of Natural Medicine
3025 SW Corbett Ave
Portland, OR 97201
February 13, 2019

Subject: Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians Pay Parity Bill

Dear Senate and Health Care Committees,

My name is Amanda Watters, ND, and I am a member of the Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians (OANP). As a naturopathic primary care physician, I work in two medical clinics in SW Portland. First, I am an attending physician at the National University of Natural Medicine, where I teach naturopathic medical students and provide primary care services to adults and children at our **Tier 4 Patient Centered Primary Care Home** (as certified by the Oregon Health Authority). Secondly, I work in private practice at Integrative Pediatrics, which is a **medical home** that serves a patient base of **over 15,000 children** from all around Portland and SW Washington.

I earned my degree in naturopathic medicine after 5 years of study at National University of Natural Medicine, and then completed **three years of residency**, as accredited by the Council on Naturopathic Medical Education – equivalent to an MD family physician.

In the current Legislative Session, OANP has a robust advocacy agenda. Our focus is on the patient, and ensuring access to their choice for appropriate and timely care. We are also highly motivated to work for equal reimbursement for equal services, as the current disparity in pay puts a significant financial burden on naturopathic doctors and ultimately impacts patient access to care.

On the next page I've outlined some of the specific financial differences in reimbursement rates that I see within my very own private practice, where my MD/DO/NP colleagues are sometimes paid as much as 55% more than I am for the exact same services within our clinic. This has led to restrictions in patient care and scheduling, as my clinic simply can't afford to allow me to see the patients for whom we will get reimbursed so poorly – instead, patients are scheduled with a different provider who can bill and be reimbursed appropriately. Subsequently, patients must wait longer until they can be seen, and their choice in provider type is limited.

This is why I am asking that you vote **YES** on the **Naturopathic Physician Pay Parity** bill.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this bill. I hope we'll be able to count on your support.

Sincerely,

Dr. Amanda Watters

SUPPORT PARITY FOR NATUROPATHIC PHYSICIANS TO ADDRESS OREGON'S SHORTAGE OF PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS

- As a primary care physician in a pediatric medical home, I experience discrimination by insurance companies who reimburse me a fraction of what they reimburse my colleagues who are trained as MD's, DO's, or NP's and who provide the same medical services within the very same clinic. Services we provide include:
 - Well child care from birth – 18 years
 - Immunizations
 - Sports physicals
 - Treatment for acute and chronic illness
 - 24-hour nurse advice line
- After receiving my degree in naturopathic medicine, I completed 3 years of an accredited residency, giving me the **equivalent years in training** to an **MD family physician**.
- Consistent with many of my peers, my student loan balance after 5 years of study in naturopathic medicine was \$231,426.71.
- The disparity in reimbursement **restricts my ability to provide essential primary care services to Oregonians**, and creates undue hardship in paying back my student loan.

Reimbursement rates are shown below from 3 insurance companies with whom I am currently contracted and credentialed. Rates are quoted for a return office visit billing code (99213), and show **disparities of up to 55%**.

