

Name: Carrie Baldwin-Sayre, ND

Date: 2/18/19

Subject: SB 734, Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians Pay Parity Bill

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson and members of the Healthcare Committee,

My name is Carrie Baldwin-Sayre and I am a Naturopathic Physician. I graduated from the National University of Natural Medicine (NUNM) in 2004, then completed 3 years of a general practice residency. As the president of the Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians and Associate Dean in the College of Naturopathic Medicine at NUNM, I am in a unique position to understand the concerns of students and practicing NDs. I can attest to the thorough training of ND students, as our curriculum was intentionally designed to reflect best practices in medical education. NDs receive a rigorous foundational education in the biomedical sciences – including histology, microbiology, anatomy and gross anatomy, physiology, embryology, immunology, pathology, neuroscience and genetics. Following this foundation, they receive intensive study in all of the clinical sciences, including orthopedics and neurology, otorhinolaryngology, dermatology, gynecology and reproductive medicine, gastroenterology, cardiology and pulmonology, all in both the classroom and in outpatient clinical settings. They are trained to diagnose, prevent and treat both acute and chronic disease. Our students learn what would be considered the conventional “standard of care” pharmacologic treatments as well as natural therapeutics which are well-researched and evidence-based, with a heavy emphasis on preventive medicine, lifestyle and dietary modification. ND’s intensive education in nutrition, over 150 classroom hours and in-depth clinical application for 2 years, is of particular benefit to our patients for the prevention and treatment of chronic disease.

Our students complete their internships in a variety of settings, including the NUNM academic medical centers which are state-credentialed Tier 4 Patient-Centered Primary Care Homes. This Tier 4 designation attests not only to the high quality of the student clinical training, but to the excellent outcomes achieved by our patients, over a third of whom receive Medicaid. Our students also train in 8 community clinic settings, specifically serving marginalized and vulnerable populations. We have multiple clinical collaborations with OHSU and Pacific University. Our clinics have received grants from the Washington County Public Health Department and participate in the Vaccines for Children program. NUNM recently received a 1-million-dollar grant from the National Institutes of Health to collaborate with OSU and others to investigate a botanical extract for treatment of inflammatory bowel disease. Needless to say, our graduates are very well-trained outpatient physicians, receiving more than 1200 hours of hands-on patient care with a solid foundation in evidence-based medicine and working with underserved populations.

And yet, even our academic medical centers do not frequently contract with commercial insurers because of poor reimbursement rates. Out of necessity, and to

keep the doors open and maintain a rigorous training environment for our students, our clinics are mostly funded via tuition dollars. Our students leave the institution with a debt load similar to that of MDs and DOs, commonly over \$300,000. Most of them go on to work in private practice, rather than as employees of a healthcare system. As such, there are huge overhead costs associated with operating a practice. When reimbursement rates are 40% lower than that of other primary care providers (including PAs and NPs), it is difficult to keep the doors open and provide needed care to Oregonians.

After this 4-year residential education, our graduates take board exams for licensure, and complete 32 Continuing Education hours every year to maintain their license. Licensed naturopathic physicians are overseen by our regulatory board whose purpose is to protect the safety of the public. As a profession we have an excellent safety record and have been continuously licensed as physicians for nearly 100 years in virtually every county throughout the state.

In 2013, the Oregon Healthcare Workforce Committee made 4 specific recommendations to improve the primary care workforce capacity in the state. Within these recommendations was one key directive:

“Make better use of naturopaths as part of the primary care workforce by removing contracting, credentialing, coverage, and payment barriers.” (emphasis added)

It is now 2019 and 5 years later these massive payment barriers still exist. Please help us to improve the capacity of the Primary Care Workforce in Oregon by allowing these highly-qualified healthcare providers to stay in business. I am asking that you vote YES on the SB 734, the Naturopathic Physician Pay Parity bill.

Sincerely,



Carrie Baldwin-Sayre, ND

President, Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians