

Name: Cori Burke, N.D.
Date: February 12, 2019
Subject: Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians Pay Parity Bill

Dear Senate and Health Care Committees,

My name is Dr. Cori Burke and I am a naturopathic physician. I would like to share my experience working as an ND to show the importance of this profession in the delivery of quality healthcare in the state of Oregon, and the barriers that we face in trying to deliver this care.

I graduated from the National University of Natural Medicine in 2014. Naturopathic (ND) medical schools are comparable to allopathic (MD) medical schools in many regards, but there are several aspects of the curriculum that sets naturopathic physicians apart. Although we are expertly trained in modern medical sciences and diagnostics, much of the ND curriculum is devoted to health optimization, disease prevention, and non-pharmaceutical/non-surgical approaches to disease management. This unique focus has the potential to drastically reduce healthcare costs if more patients had access to naturopathic medicine.

In my practice, I care for people of all ages. I act as primary care provider for many of my patients although most insurance companies that I am paneled with refuse to acknowledge me in this role. This creates a barrier for my patients to access necessary diagnostic testing and referrals to specialists.

As a naturopathic physician I spend more time with my patients than most other types of healthcare providers. Initial visits are 60 minutes and return visits are 30 minutes. This allows me adequate time to provide comprehensive nutritional, exercise, and stress management counseling to all of my patients, which I believe to be a cornerstone of health. It also allows me time to coordinate care for patients with complex health conditions and comorbidities, which is common in my patient population.

It is abysmal that insurance reimbursement rates for naturopathic physicians are far below the rates for other provider types. I regularly find that I am receiving reimbursements that are 25-50% of what my MD and Nurse Practitioner (NP) colleagues receive. This unfortunately makes practicing medicine as a naturopathic physician in Oregon unsustainable, and many of my colleagues have made the difficult decision to stop accepting insurance or to move out of state, further limiting access of Oregonians to quality healthcare.

I believe strongly in the rights of Oregonians to have choices in their healthcare and medical providers. I urge you to vote yes on the Naturopathic Physician Pay Parity bill.

Sincerely,

Cori Burke, N.D.
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