

Name: Darcy A. Ries, ND

Date: Feb. 13, 2019

Subject: Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians Pay Parity Bill

Dear Senate and Health Care Committees,

My name is Dr. Darcy Ries and I am a Naturopathic Physician practicing in Portland, OR since 2012. I would like to share my experience working with 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.

ABOUT OUR PROFESSION:

- We complete 4 year graduate medical school training including the study of medical sciences that MD's also receive: anatomy & physiology, immunology, cardiology, pharmacology, gastroenterology, gynecology, dermatology, etc.
- NDs in Oregon are seen as peers and partners in healthcare delivery. I have collaborated with surgeons, endocrinologists, cardiologists, and oncologists.
- For 85% of my patients, I am their designated PCP and the only doctor they see for general care. I have a general medicine practice, treating common conditions like diabetes, hypothyroidism, digestive disorders, hypertension, autoimmune disease, headaches, women's health concerns, and more.
- Being trained as a primary care provider allows me to utilize the full scope of my practice with patients every day.

BARRIERS WE FACE:

- Reimbursement rates have been and continue to be lower than that of our MD and DO peers. We are often paid less than mid-level providers such as PAs or NPs. And we are filling the gap of providing primary care...so long as we can keep our doors open.
- Low reimbursement issues have led me and fellow providers in our clinic to drop selected health insurance contracts, as we just can't afford to give quality care for poor pay. I once got a check from an insurance company for \$14, for a 99214 service code. We no longer contract with this company, and have had to turn away patients with this and similar plans we have dropped.
- The debt I carry from medical school loans is currently over \$350K. My earning capacity as an ND is insufficient to surmount this debt.
- Pay disparity means more and more NDs drop from the market because they are burned out, disgruntled, or both. There is high demand for our medicine, and patients deserve their choice of provider. They'll only be able to choose from who is still standing.

I am asking that you vote YES on the Naturopathic Physician Pay Parity bill.

Sincerely,
Darcy A. Ries