

Dear Senate and Health Care Committees,

Feb. 12th, 2019

My name is Laura Torgerson. I am Naturopathic Physician in Portland, Oregon. I received my degree from National College of Natural Medicine in 2003 and have had a private practice downtown for 15 years called Everyday Wellness Clinic.

My education and life experience are extensive. I graduated from the University of Chicago in 1987, started two businesses in Russia in the 1990's and volunteered for 4 years as a rural fire fighter and rescue worker in southern tier New York. I speak three languages: Russian and German, in addition to English. I am actively learning Spanish along with my boys. I am an asset to my patients.

In order to become a Naturopathic Physician, I took two years of medical prerequisites after college and studied at the National College of Natural Medicine for four years. Two weeks after graduation, I had twins.

I have two employees who support me and insure that my patients' needs are responded to in a timely fashion. Both are paid above minimum wage. I focus on GI and Cardiovascular Health, Type Two Diabetes and Menopause.

The health problems most naturopathic and medical doctors treat are diseases of lifestyle: chronic poor food choices, overeating and sitting too much. Naturopathic physicians are trained to help our patients to make the changes that will improve health in the long run. We are trained to take in-depth histories, order and interpret labs and do physical exams. Our goal is to help patients discover the underlying cause of disease and bring about a return to health.

My appointments are typically 60 minutes long. (Our intake form is 8 pages). It takes time for patients to remember and relate their medical history, and to build trust to reveal what they are regularly eating, doing, or not doing that negatively impacts their health. Although I have my DEA license, **I do not reach first and only for pharmaceutical solutions. Pharmaceutical drugs shift the cost of health care to the patient, enriches the pharmaceutical industry and doesn't teach the patient anything about what they can do to improve their health. And, pharmaceutical medications all have side effects, such as skin cancer and early onset dementia.**

Because I love my work, I have put up with my low income figuring- that it was **only** because I only see 7 patients/day versus the 20 or more that an MD will see. However, I recently learned that **Naturopathic Physicians are being compensated at 60% of what an MD makes per visit.** I feel like a total chump. It took me 13 years to pay off my student loan and I have twin high school sophomores to put through college. I pay city, tri-met, state and federal taxes. I also am a volunteer with Serv-OR and MRC. I deserve better.

I put my heart, soul and time into helping my patients become healthier for life under my care. They focus on diet, exercise, posture, balance and leading a balanced life. Some of my patients had never read or evaluated a food label. They didn't learn much about health in school and the food industry doesn't care about their health. My patients tell me that they feel listened to and that they learn from me. Meanwhile, an MD spends 10-15 minutes on average with each patient, prescribes an additional medication, and doesn't honor the underlying definition of the word doctor: to teach.

I can deal with my choice to spend time with my patients, but I don't deserve to be underpaid by the insurance companies. **Please vote yes on the Naturopathic Physician Parity Bill.**

Sincerely,

Laura Torgerson, ND

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