

Name: Robyn Kutka, ND

Date: 2/11/2019

Subject: Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians Pay Parity Bill

Dear Senate and Health Care Committees,

My name is Robyn Kutka 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 have attended a 4 year accredited medical school and am licensed as a primary care physician in the state of Oregon. Many patients utilize me as their primary care physician, while others see me as another member of their healthcare team. I am currently celebrating my 10th year of private practice and work with a team of physicians and accessory healthcare providers in Tualatin. Together, we provide services to men and women of all ages, ranging from annual wellness exams and acute care to managing chronic care concerns such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. We work with other healthcare providers for specialty referrals when needed to ensure our patients receive the healthcare they need and I serve as a referral source to many physicians to provide their patients with annual well-woman exams and hormone/menopause care.

The exceptional care my office provides goes above and beyond typical services our patients are used to. While adhering to standard of care guidelines, we typically exceed patients' expectations for treatment of healthcare concerns and addressing approaches to prevention of disease.

Unfortunately, pay disparity and the associated lack of income negatively impacts my business, my family, and my patients in multiple ways; for example:

- Due to extremely low reimbursement rates, I've had to limit what insurances I accept, limiting access to care for some patients
- There is no monetary budget for things like patient outreach, marketing, in-house billing, etc.
- Lack of budget to hire people to do services above, often requires I do them, taking away hours that should be spent providing patient care
- Budget for support staff is extremely limited and results in higher turnover rates
- It is difficult to meet evolving patient expectations such as electronic communication and patient portals, due to expense of these programs and lack of income to invest in them
- My personal salary is quite low (guaranteed is below poverty guidelines, with owner's draws if able).

- The majority of income I do generate goes back into maintaining the practice and paying my staff. Until last year, I worked an additional full-time job to generate income for living expenses and to pay student loans.
- Thankfully, my significant other manages my practice and the practice can pay him – this is how my family is able to maintain our limited household budget. Without him as my practice manager, my business would not be sustainable, and over 1,000 patients would lose access to healthcare at my office.
- My lack of income means I do not currently pay on my student loans – a burden on the federal government

The above points are just a few examples of how disastrous reimbursement rates affect my practice and patient care. It is beyond time to address this discrepancy.

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

Sincerely,

Robyn Kutka, ND