

March 25, 2021

Re: SB772, Support Fair Pay for Naturopathic Doctors (NDs)

Dear Senate Committee on Health Care,

I feel strongly that sustainable change in health care necessitates work at the legislative level, which is why I represented NDs in Oregon on the Universal Access to Primary Care Workgroup in 2020. I earned my degree in naturopathic medicine after 4 years of study at National University of Natural Medicine, where I then completed three years of residency – **this is the equivalent years in training to an MD family physician.**

As an ND, I work as the medical director for a non-profit organization that provides care to children with developmental disabilities across the state. We serve over 700 families each week from our 8 clinic sites spanning from Portland to Medford. Previously, I worked in an integrative primary care medical home that served over 15,000 children annually.

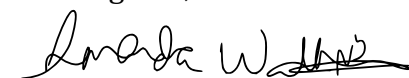
I have seen first-hand that there are discrepancies in the insurance reimbursement between NDs and our MD/DO/NP colleagues; they were sometimes paid as much as 55% more than I was for the exact same services within the same clinic.

As you likely know, Oregon has a critical shortage of primary care providers. We know that primary care specialties are consistently some of the lowest-earning specialties in medicine. When NDs are reimbursed only a fraction of what other primary care providers in Oregon receive, it limits our ability to serve patients who desperately need care. Without access to primary care services, we know that patients utilize emergency medical systems in times of acute need, where they are unable to receive continuity of care, and where care comes at a much greater expense to the medical system. **Oregon simply cannot afford to limit the care provided by over 1,000 licensed primary care providers through unjust reimbursement for equal services.**

This is why I am urging that you vote **YES** on the **SB 277**.

Thank you for your time and consideration during this busy legislative session!

Kind regards,



Amanda Watters, ND

Medical Director

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Support parity for NDs to address Oregon’s shortage of primary care providers

- As a primary care physician in a pediatric medical home, I experienced discrimination by insurance companies who reimbursed me a fraction of what they reimburse my colleagues who are trained as MD’s, DO’s, or NP’s and who provide the same medical services within the very same clinic. Services provided include:
 - Well child care from birth – 18 years
 - Immunizations
 - Sports physicals
 - Treatment for acute and chronic illness
 - 24-hour nurse advice line
- After receiving my degree in naturopathic medicine, I completed 3 years of an accredited residency, giving me the **equivalent years in training** to an **MD family physician**.
- Consistent with many of my peers, my student loan balance at graduation was \$231,426.71.
- The disparity in reimbursement **restricts my ability to provide essential primary care services to Oregonians**, and creates undue hardship in paying back my student loan.

Reimbursement rates are shown below from 3 insurance companies billed at my clinic. Rates are quoted for a return office visit billing code (99213), and show **disparities of up to 55%**.

