

Dear Senate and Health Care Committees,

My name is Heidi van der Velden, RN, and I am a patient of a Naturopathic Physician.

I would like to share my experience working with an ND to show the importance of this profession in the state of Oregon. As a surgical RN in the healthcare field for 11 years now, I have seen first hand the importance of patients having a choice in where they seek care for various illnesses.

Despite (or perhaps because of) my Western medicine training and seeing its strengths and drawbacks, In many if not most of my personal health concerns, I choose a naturopath first. This is because of their skill in applying not only the pharmaceutical interventions an MD would apply, but also knowing when and how to use other options which are just as helpful but with fewer side effects.

A personal example; when I was having gallbladder pain, my NP casually and cavalierly suggested I might need my gallbladder removed. My naturopath, however, prescribed extremely effective herbs in addition to dietary changes which resulted in a complete resolution of the problem.

Sometimes surgery is of course indicated. But it should be a last resort, and that's not the first or last time an MD or NP has casually suggested the surgical removal of organs, while a naturopath has implemented safe and effective alternatives that saved me pain and suffering, and saved healthcare dollars for my insurance company.

Let's be real, it all comes down to the almighty dollar in this society... would my insurance company rather pay for a couple of naturopathic visits, or a FAR more expensive cholecystectomy surgery?

Given their ability to apply both modern Western and "alternative" interventions, depending on what the situation requires, (which most MD and NPs seem ill prepared to do) I strongly believe naturopaths should be making as much money as their primary care peers. We need them to be compensated fairly so that they can continue to provide this absolutely essential level of care, saving us all both unnecessary pain, illness, risky procedures, and money down the line.

Why are naturopathic physicians paid so little compared to the other providers I have seen?

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

Sincerely, Heidi van der Velden, RN