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2/1/2021

Re: HB 2673 Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians Pay Parity Bill

Dear Senate and Health Care Committee,

My name is Laura Blevins and I am a Naturopathic Physician. I own and manage a busy integrative primary care clinic in Klamath Falls, Oregon, an area with a high physician turnover and shortage of primary care providers. I am writing to request your support of the above bill. Naturopathic Physicians attend accredited 4 year medical schools and are held to high standards for maintaining licensure and completing ongoing continuing education. NDs offer patients an integrative approach to medicine utilizing conventional tools such as labs, imaging, and pharmaceuticals but also offering skilled expertise in diet/nutrition, herbal medicine, and lifestyle changes. We not only can help to treat acute and severe conditions, but can also help to change the foundations of health to *prevent disease or reverse chronic illness*. We spend significant time with each patient to learn their full health history and to be able to treat the whole person.

I currently offer holistic primary care in a mostly insurance-based practice. I personally have a patient base of over 2000 patients that I provide a full scope of primary care and specialty services for. Despite being exceedingly busy providing care, I am *fully reliant* on cash pay services and supplement sales to maintain my business as the amount I am paid by insurance payers is often *abysmal* compared to other primary care providers. If I did not offer cash pay services and share the overhead of my building with other providers, I would not be able to maintain my current care model. I see approx. 25% Medicaid patients, 60% private insurance, and 15% un-insured/self-pay. I have struggled to recruit and retain another ND to work with me due to the low reimbursement rates. Many NDs I know in Oregon are strictly cash pay practices, often pricing out low income individuals and families. I am proud to be able to offer my services to those of all incomes by taking their insurance plan, but it is a constant struggle. I have done nothing but **gain further debt** on my student loans despite making regular payments based on my income. When I work incredibly hard providing excellent care to my patients, the least I can hope for is decent pay and the ability to provide for my family and pay back my debt. The fact that Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners have pay parity in Oregon, but NDs do not, is an atrocity that need remedied at the soonest opportunity. Pay parity for NDs in Oregon would open up many more practices to insurance and a wider and more diverse patient population, helping to provide holistic care for those *most in need*. It would also help to retain more graduates from the Naturopathic school in Oregon to stay and work in Oregon, helping to fill the primary care gap.

Thank you for your time and support of Oregonians accessing Naturopathic care, your yes vote on HB 2673 is greatly appreciated.

Best in health,

Dr. Laura Blevins, ND