

February 9, 2021

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

Dear Senate and Health Care Committees,

My name is Terra Soma 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.

I have an autoimmune condition (Hashimoto's). Originally, I saw an MD who did not do the proper testing to diagnose the condition. She found low thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) and prescribed me a synthetic thyroid medication (which I recently learned by reading medical studies can increase cardiovascular disease and rapid bone loss). When I explained that I didn't want to start a synthetic medication in my 30s and wanted to explore other alternatives first, she did not listen to me. My body will live with the consequences of medical decisions and the MD did not honor that.

Thankfully, I found another doctor who was willing to listen to me and treat me in a way that aligns with my values. That doctor was a naturopathic physician who did further testing, including thyroid antibodies which revealed Hashimoto's. The naturopath explained T3 and T4 and thyroid antibodies and offered me not only an accurate diagnosis, but alternative solutions, including a gluten-free diet as part of my treatment plan.

My naturopathic physician spends 45-minutes with me each visit (compared to a 15- or 20-min MD visit). As a trauma survivor who lives alone, I appreciate that my naturopathic physician asks about all aspects of my health from social connection, to time in nature, to mental health. No MD I have EVER worked with has done a fraction of the care my naturopathic physician provides. She is kind, thoughtful, thorough, and checks in on me if she hasn't heard from me for a while. She listens to what I think might be going on with my body and answers any questions I have. She explains my biology to me and gives me tips for stress management, water intake, and exercise. She even referred me to a fantastic mental health therapist who has been a lifesaver.

I work in strategy innovation in a healthcare system and am often quite disappointed by some of the doctors and others I work with disparaging naturopaths, especially because in my experience, MDs provide significantly inferior care to NDs. Pay inequity is a terrible demonstration of the unwarranted bias against NDs. It is time for us to move past this.

Naturopathic physicians are essential to a healthy community. It is unfortunate that naturopathic physicians are paid so little compared to the other providers I have seen and time for this to change.

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

Sincerely,

Terra Soma