

Dear House Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee,

My name is Cynthia Cordray. I am a patient of a licensed naturopathic doctor (ND). I would like to share my experience working with my doctor, and ask you to support HB2555.

Many years ago I chose to make a Naturopathic Doctor my primary care physician. I did this because I wanted to focus on supporting my body as a whole, and keeping myself as healthy as possible. I like the proactive, health centered focus of keeping the body in balance, as opposed to the reactive model of waiting for a problem and then responding. While there is a time for using the allopathic model of acute care, I like to reserve that for emergency situations.

Working with a Naturopathic Physician allows me to have regular appointments focused on my overall health - physical, emotional and mental - and to make adjustments as necessary. My doctor has 45 minutes per patient and therefore is able to fully delve into getting to know her patients and understanding how to best help them improve their health. I can honestly say that my ND has had more of an impact on my health and life than any other person. I do not know what I would do without her in my life!

My ND is the primary provider of all my health care. She performs my annual wellness visits, orders labs, imaging tests, and preventative screening exams, and prescribes any medications I may need. If there is an issue that she wants a specialist to look at, she refers me to someone and then we work together to decide how to proceed with the results. This partnership gives me a truly integrative healthcare model.

Because my ND is focused on prevention, she teaches me how to manage my health through diet and nutrition, activity, stress management, sleep hygiene and so many other things that fall within the scope of her skills. I have no doubt that I have prevented or delayed serious illness and expensive treatments due to her expertise and guidance.

Unfortunately, naturopathic doctors in Oregon are not being fairly compensated for the care they give me and for the important role they play in our state's healthcare workforce. Naturopathic doctors are paid about half of what all the other provider types (MDs, DOs, NPs and PAs) are paid for the same exact billing code and same service provided. **This discrepancy puts my doctor on unstable financial ground and puts my access to my provider of choice in jeopardy. Naturopathic doctors are being forced to drop insurance plans to remain financially viable.** There was a time when Oregon was creating integrative medical centers with a mix of NDs and MDs on staff, all learning, growing and consulting in order to bring the best of both worlds to their patient care. Unfortunately this model was not sustainable due to the discrepancy in compensation from insurance carriers. It is almost as if insurance providers would prefer their clients develop serious illnesses that require expensive treatments and medications rather than supporting their health in order to avoid these diseases.

I am a retired person who pays for my own medical insurance through my previous employer. I keep this insurance because it covers my ND. If it didn't, or if she were forced to go to a cash pay model due to the lack of compensation from the insurance companies, I would drop my insurance and put that money towards seeing my ND. That is how important and vital her care is

to me. Other patients do not have that option and would be forced to change doctors, ultimately costing them more in health and money down the road.

It is essential that people be able to utilize their health insurance to see the doctor of their choice. It is also essential that we recognize the important role that Naturopathic Medicine plays in helping people stay healthy and lowering medical costs over their lifetimes. The allopathic model is great at acute care, but it does not measure up to the Naturopathic model when it comes to prevention and overall health. It is only right that Naturopathic Doctors should receive the same compensation as other medical professionals for the services they provide.

I am asking you to please vote yes on HB2555 and ensure access to licensed naturopathic doctors.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Cordray
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