

March 10, 2023

Re: HB 2555, Vote YES to Support Fair Pay for NDs

Dear House Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee,

My name is Kathryn Mercer and I am a naturopathic doctor (ND). I would like to share my experience working in Oregon as a licensed ND and ask you to please support HB 2555.

I love helping people. It's for this reason that I have sacrificed years of my life to, and invested hugely in, POST-BACHELORS medical school and establishing a practice in my local community. Each day I use every tool at my disposal to help my patients feel better and to prevent chronic disease. My education and training enable me to offer both standard-of-care treatments and gentle alternatives, offering care that my patients greatly desire.

As a primary care provider, I am licensed to manage the majority of the healthcare needs for my patients, including wellness exams, lab orders, cancer screenings and prescriptions. I make referrals to other providers and specialists when appropriate, working as an integral part of my patient's healthcare team. In addition, I educate my patients on nutrition, exercise, stress management and sleep quality, empowering them to be proactive in their health. This unique approach helps to prevent illness and reduce the need for pharmaceutical, surgical and hospital management. In this time of rising healthcare costs and growing provider shortages, naturopathic doctors help to fill a need, not only in our patients' lives, but as a part of the state's healthcare system and workforce.

Unfortunately, NDs are not being fairly compensated for our valuable contributions to healthcare. This appalling reimbursement discrepancy by insurance companies makes it very difficult for doctors like me to stay in practice and deliver this essential, desired and unique level of care. Loan payments and the cost of running a medical clinic are THE SAME AS OTHER PCPS, YET REIMBURSEMENT RATES ONLY MEAN IT IS unsustainable to practice in this state with such poor pay.

As doctors close their doors, not only are jobs lost, but patients lose their doctor and access to their preferred provider type. The disturbing outcome of this injustice is that private insurance companies are limiting our communities' access to healthcare, and the state is allowing it.

We are here - licensed primary care doctors, working hard to serve our patients and communities. Please help us to survive and continue to do so by finally passing HB 2555.

Sincerely yours,

Kathryn Mercer
716 SW Highland Avenue
Redmond OR 97756
cascadeclinic@gmail.com