

Dear House Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee,

My name is Jess Pernsteiner, and 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.

I understand and support the work of diverse medical providers - I received lifesaving cardiac surgery as an infant, so I am fully appreciative of receiving care from specialty providers and MDs. However, within the past 2 years, I have established care with a naturopathic doctor in Portland, to address long standing digestive issues that have had a significant impact on my daily activities and overall quality of life.

I decided to establish care with an ND, after not getting answers through my previous primary care physician. My ND clinic provided me with thorough, comprehensive care. I chose this because I know that NDs work holistically to address the root causes, rather than just treating a patient's symptoms. I am incredibly grateful for the access to ND healthcare for my current issue, as well as all other medical issues.

My ND is actively working with me through addressing concerns with all aspects of my life - through diet and nutrition, staying active, overcoming stress, and improving my sleep, in addition to prescribing medications or alternative treatments. This is the best type of preventive medicine and has saved me from worse illness or more expensive treatments down the line.

I understand that naturopathic doctors in Oregon are not being fairly compensated for the care they provide to their patients. This is absolutely unacceptable, as these providers are essential healthcare workers providing a necessary service to so many. 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.

I have paid out of pocket for some ND services, but, I am not able to financially afford this for all of my services. For me to be able to see my ND, I need to be able to use my health insurance at their clinic. Health care costs and insurance are already significant for me, and as someone with a preexisting cardiac condition, I need to be able to continue to receive preventative care. It is absolutely necessary that ND providers can accept health insurance and bill for services, so that so many patients are able to access the care they need now, preventing them from critical and emergency care in the future. Ensuring that NDs can stay in network with insurance plans is an action that can be done to help protect this service for myself, and others.

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

Sincerely,

Jess Pernsteiner
Portland, OR

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Jess Pernsteiner

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