

To Whom It May Concern,

Please see attached document for further context. This email is meant to be read along with the attached document. Here I will provide some of my story and why I am submitting this document to you.

I've been seeing a naturopathic doctor for about 8 years now and I have been made aware of the unfair pay and treatment between naturopaths and typical MDs. I was compelled to submit this as that deeply saddens me to hear because of how important and critical my naturopathic doctor is in my health care. I firmly believe they deserve the same pay and treatment and options as any other MD would.

I have two chronic lifelong health issues that can't be cured and cause me a lot of symptoms and troubles in my day-to-day life and without my naturopathic doctor I don't know where I'd be. I've tried for over 15 years and spent well over \$30k in care with typical MDs and specialists and received poor care and no help. It's always been a waste of both time and money. Never mind the severe disappointment of waiting months to see them just to have them brush you and your struggles off and tell you that they don't care to investigate. Every experience I've had with typical MDs has been laughable at best and they don't care to take the time to truly help me or diagnose my symptoms or help me find the root cause and look for solutions. Every time I am ran out the door with nothing more than 10 minutes of their time to try and quickly explain what I'm struggling with and then they don't bother to listen and push me out the door with over-the-counter medications that are proven to make my issues worse if taken with my known health conditions.

My most recent visit with a typical MD I explained my issues that I have been having after a new diagnosis last summer (I waited over 6 months being shuffled around and on wait lists) that has made it impossible for me to go about my day-to-day life and he made a joke about my experience and my struggles. He flat out told me he had no interest and wasn't going to run tests or do anything. He then proceeded to make several jokes about particular symptoms I was struggling with that sent me to the ER and then told me and I quote "to crap in my yard because that is the natural way to relieve yourself and should help with the pain". My after-visit summary had jokes in it and the take away was he told me not to worry about this diagnosis because there wasn't that much research on it yet anyway (false) and walked out of the room. I'd like to say that this isn't typical but this is about the level of care I find myself receiving from MDs as well as specialists (gastro, endo etc).

The poor treatment from MDs is what led me to seek out a naturopathic doctor in the first place and she is irreplaceable. I only wish I had switched to a naturopath sooner.

Any time I've had an issue she's been able to figure it out almost immediately and if she can't she puts in a lot of time (including her own time sometimes) and effort into searching for the answer and resolution. She never leaves me without an answer.

She's taken over all my routine labs (because my MD refuses as she says "I'm too young to need to worry" even though one of my diageneses is type 1 diabetes and requires routine blood

work), she orders any labs needed or other tests and because of her ordering my colonoscopy for me (because my MD refused telling me to just take Imodium and deal with my symptoms) I finally found the answer to the pain and using the bathroom 9-10 times a day for 4 years straight. She has been managing the symptoms of my colitis ever since I was diagnosed and has been doing so far better than any specialist (gastro) or MD has. She listens to me, addresses every symptom one by one, she often is willing to go over my time slot to make sure I walk out with something figured out or some plan, she truly cares about me and my wellbeing. Something I can't say for any MD or specialist and I've seen many since I was a teen due to my health issues.

I have even referred all my family, friends and even husband to her that struggle with their health and lack of care from typical MDs. She has worked just as hard to care for my husband too. I have also seen other naturopaths in her clinic on days she was on maternity leave and they all work so hard and are incredible doctors who offer the same attention, time and effort.

I can't stress enough how valuable my naturopath is to my health care. They work so hard and are so much more knowledgeable than any MD or specialist I've encountered. They deserve equal pay and to be treated on the same level as an MD because they ARE a doctor just like any typical MD is. If anything they put more time and effort in with less resources, lack of help (they don't have nurses) and pay and still far exceed the MDs.

Thank you for your time,

Megan Hedges

Dear House Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee,

My name is Megan Hedges 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.

Though there are many diverse and valuable types of medical providers, the provider that I, above all, value for my regular care is my ND. The clinical expertise and unique training that my doctor offers, coupled with the dedicated time and attention given to all my concerns, makes him/her/them irreplaceable to me.

My ND manages the majority of my healthcare needs, whether it be my annual wellness visits, necessary lab and imaging tests, preventive screening exams or vital prescriptions. They also refer me to medical specialists as needed, working in partnership with other providers to offer a truly integrative approach to my healthcare.

My ND takes the time to teach me about my health and how to best manage my concerns 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.

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.**

It is essential that I be able to utilize my health insurance to see my doctor. I cannot afford to both purchase health insurance and pay out of pocket for my regular and preventive care. It's not only unfair, it's unrealistic. I need my ND to stay in network with my insurance and to stay in business!

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

Sincerely,
Megan Hedges