

Dear House Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee,

My name is Craig Christensen. I am a patient of several licensed naturopathic doctors (ND). I would like to share my experience working with my doctors and ask you to support HB2555.

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

My NDs have had just as much training as a primary care MD. In fact, some have had more education and training. And they receive training in a broad range of medical topics including the usage, differences, and interactions between allopathic, naturopathic and homeopathic medicines. Additionally, some of my ND doctors have 5 years of education and multiple years of residency. To say that these doctors are not as qualified as MDs is a myth we must overcome.

My NDs manage most 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 NDs 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 illnesses 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.

Additionally, with a shortage of doctors causing difficulty in obtaining appointments in a timely manner, expansion of ND usage and fair financial compensation for NDs will support the health care of all Oregonians.

It is essential that I be able to utilize my health insurance to see my doctors. I cannot afford to both purchase health insurance and pay out of pocket for my regular and preventive care. It's not only unfair, but also unrealistic. I need my NDs 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,
Craig Christensen