

3/11/2023

Re: HB 2555, Vote YES to Support Naturopathic Doctors (NDs)

Dear Oregon House Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee,

I am writing to express my support for HB2555, and as someone who holds both a Medical Doctor (MD) and a Naturopathic Doctor (ND) degree, I believe I am in a unique position to do so. I obtained my MD degree in 1966 and went on to graduate with a second doctorate in medicine in 1997 from the Natural University of Natural Medicine (NUNM), which is the Naturopathic Medical School in Portland, OR. Following this, I also taught as an associate professor at NUNM.

In my role as professor to NDs for the past two decades, I have witnessed firsthand the rigors of the ND medical education, which is equivalent to that of an MD education. The ND curriculum includes comprehensive and rigorous courses in medical sciences, such as biochemistry, anatomy, physiology, histology, pathology, cell biology, immunology, embryology, microbiology, genetics, and associated labs. Additionally, the four-year medical school training covers all the clinical sciences seen within a conventional medical education, including pharmacology, minor surgery, nutrition, history taking, physical examination, clinical reasoning, and all the major medical clinical nosologies. I also personally taught minor surgery.

In addition to the conventional medicine clinical sciences, NDs are also well-versed in complementary medicine sciences, with many more hours in nutrition than a conventional medical student. Moreover, NDs are well-suited to guide their patients in low-cost lifestyle medicine. Most patients take nutritional supplements, and NDs are best suited to guide their patients on specific cost-effective supplements to address their health concerns and conditions.

Outside of the lecture hall and lab, I also worked as a clinical supervisor for ND medical students and residents on teaching shifts. NDs are capable of not only diagnosing and treating patients but also of helping people make difficult changes to their health. After graduation, many of my students have entered various medical-related fields, but most have gone on to work in primary care and are helping patients all over Oregon. NDs are an integral part of the primary care delivery system in Oregon.

What is most concerning though is that NDs are not being fairly compensated for their valuable contributions to healthcare in Oregon. This makes it difficult for NDs to stay in network with insurance companies, and even to remain in practice for their patients. Moreover, it makes it untenable for most clinics and hospitals to hire NDs as employees especially during a time of healthcare provider shortages. NDs should be compensated fairly for the care they are able to deliver to the people of Oregon. Therefore, I urge you to vote yes on HB 2555 and support fair pay for Naturopathic Doctors.

Sincerely yours,
Dohn R. Kruschwitz, MD, ND
Portland, OR