



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 Dr. Carrie Baldwin-Sayre and I am a Naturopathic Physician and past-president of the Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians. As an administrator at the National University of Natural Medicine (NUNM) I can attest to the thorough training of naturopathic physicians. They are trained to diagnose, prevent and treat both acute and chronic disease, and complete their internships in a variety of settings, including Patient-Centered Primary Care Homes and federally qualified health centers. Our graduates are very well-trained outpatient physicians, receiving more than 1200 hours of hands-on patient care.

After this 4-year residential education, our graduates take licensure exams, and complete 32 Continuing Education hours every year. Licensed ND's are overseen by a regulatory board whose purpose is to protect the safety of the public. As a profession we have an excellent safety record and have been continuously licensed as physicians for nearly 100 years in the state of Oregon.

Our students follow a variety of career paths after graduation, but there are significant barriers to working to their fullest capacity as primary care physicians. A key barrier to employment (including self-employment) is the reimbursement disparity of NDs compared to their other primary care counterparts. While NDs work successfully in a few clinical settings throughout the state alongside MDs and Nurse Practitioners, including OHSU, Central City Concern and Outside In, many other clinics are hesitant to hire NDs due to the often substantial disparity in commercial insurance reimbursement. As you might imagine, it does not make sense for clinics to bring on an ND if the reimbursement is going to be **40-60% less than other primary care provider types**. Given that student debt is similar to that of any other medical student, it also makes it extraordinarily difficult to stay in a self-employed private practice scenario for any length of time, especially if an ND wishes to treat our most vulnerable and underserved community members as many of them do.

In 2013, the **Oregon Healthcare Workforce Committee** made **4 specific recommendations** to improve the primary care workforce capacity in the state. Within these recommendations was one key directive:

“Make better use of naturopaths as part of the primary care workforce by removing contracting, credentialing, coverage, and payment barriers.” (emphasis added)

It is now 2023 and 10 years later these massive payment barriers still exist. Please help us to improve the capacity of the Primary Care Workforce in Oregon by allowing these highly-qualified healthcare providers (who have much-needed chronic disease prevention and treatment experience) to practice. **I am asking that you vote YES on HB 2555.**

Sincerely,

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