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Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs, members of the committee, thank you for having me.

My name is Dr. Rebecca Principe and I'm here representing the Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians (OANP), in favor of House Bill 2555.

We are back asking you to pass a bill which will require naturopathic doctors (NDs) to be reimbursed fairly and allow Naturopathic Physicians, licensed by the state, to be optimized in this time of provider shortage.

Naturopathic doctors have been licensed here in Oregon since 1927 and enjoy an excellent patient safety record. Like all provider types, there may be outliers, but the practice standard is scientific and evidence-based medicine and we support the state's public health goals.

As with the other provider types that are already paid equitably, naturopathic doctors are licensed as primary care providers and are eligible to hold a DEA license. We are unique in that our training affords us an additional set of tools in our toolbox, and our patient-centered approach to modern medicine is individualized, holistic and truly preventive.

Our patients appreciate and seek out our approach. I am repeatedly told how grateful they are that Oregon, leading the nation, allows them to use their insurance benefits to see their naturopathic physician. Sadly, I feel increasingly uneasy with these effusions.

The issue at hand is that compared to the other primary care providers we average close to 50-cents on the dollar. These unsustainable rates span a jarring range from 20-cents on the dollar with one insurer, up to a max of 80-cents with one – but just one. That's for the same diagnosis code and the same service provided. Same code, same service.

What this really amounts to is that insurance companies are dictating patient care, and patients are losing their doctors. I have some plans I'm holding onto, because I don't want to abandon my patients, and I'm willingly losing money on those hours. I took an oath to serve to my patients, my family and my community, but I can't be of service if I can't keep my doors open.

When it comes to cost, NDs don't gouge the system; our offices are not where great cost of healthcare is occurring. Our goal is to keep patients healthy, so they don't end up needing more expensive intervention down the line. And we're good at it! The examples that your colleagues have shared with you are not rare and every ND could give you a hundred of them.

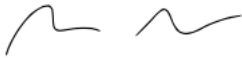
In the years since we commissioned a query of the state's All Payer, All Claims (APAC) database, and had our worst fears about reimbursement confirmed, we have not seen any improvements in this disparity and patients continue to lose doctors. Clinics have closed and according to our most recent association survey, two-thirds of respondents have either stopped billing insurance or are seriously considering dropping one or more insurance plans, specifically because of low reimbursement rates.

Oregon has an ongoing shortage of healthcare providers in primary care and behavioral health. More than \$100M in financial incentives has been dedicated to recruit licensed healthcare workers to live and practice all across the state, and those programs are poised to expand.

There are 1200 licensed naturopathic physicians in Oregon, and we are ready to contribute! Oregon NDs across the state don't need costly incentives to become a part of the healthcare workforce — all we need is fair pay from insurers.

Please pass HB 2555 out of committee. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rebecca Principe', with a stylized, cursive-like script.

Dr. Rebecca Principe  
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