

Submitter: Emily Porter
On Behalf Of: OANP
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3439

I have worked for naturopathic doctors as a medical assistant and a student for three years. I have also been a patient of naturopathic doctors and as a woman of childbearing age and a mother, my ability to trust the doctors caring for myself and my children has been a priority. In particular, I work with physicians who specialize in women's health and pediatrics. I would like to bring the following points to the committee's attention.

1. Naturopathic physicians prioritize prevention and early intervention, which reduces the development of chronic conditions requiring invasive and expensive procedures and pharmaceutical therapies. This improves the quality of life for the patient and reduces overall healthcare costs.
2. Naturopathic physicians are trained to offer comprehensive, holistic care in a way that takes the entire health status of the patient into account. Having a doctor that is trustworthy and cares deeply about the patient-doctor relationship improves patient compliance and outcomes. Because these physicians care so deeply about the quality of care they provide their patients, they refuse to compromise that care by shortening appointment times and over saturating their caseloads in order increase the volume of claims they can submit. This makes it nearly impossible to sustainably practice without dropping contracts with lower paying insurers and requiring patients to pay out of pocket for their services. Ultimately, the patient loses because they either receive a lower quality of care from their doctor, or they have to pay more out of pocket for the care they need.
3. Naturopathic physicians are GOOD doctors. They are trained to ask questions, use logic, and are not afraid to fight for their patients. They are especially good doctors for young children as their thorough education and prevention care as well as willingness to offer urgent care lessens the load on local hospitals and urgent care centers and improves patient experiences for non-emergent illnesses.
4. They are not quacks. They administer vaccines and prescribe antibiotics. They do pap smears and sports physicals. They also utilize many alternative evidence-based treatment modalities when appropriate and desired by their patients.
5. Many naturopathic providers are also midwives who provide exceptional prenatal, birth, and postpartum care for women. Midwifery care statistically decreases intervention rates and therefore decreases costs. For example, low-risk women who plan a home birth with a midwife are 17% less likely to require a cesarean section, substantially lowering the cost of childbirth by tens of thousands of dollars.
6. The populations most vulnerable to poor quality healthcare are women and children. Women's healthcare is nuanced and maternal mortality in the United States

is an ongoing problem. Families need practitioners they trust with their children's care. Investing in physicians who excel at providing quality care for these populations is of the utmost importance.

7. Many naturopaths operate primary care and family practice clinics in rural communities where access to care is already limited.

The decision to reimburse naturopathic physicians fairly is really not about the physicians. It is the patients who will pay the cost. Without pay parity, naturopaths are forced to make an impossible decision - lessen access to quality care by not contracting with payers, or lessen the quality of care by over saturating their case load. Choosing not to support this bill directly reduces access of your constituents (particularly your female and pediatric constituents) to quality healthcare.