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To Whom It May Concern:

Chair Monnes Anderson and members of the Committee, my name is Dr. Emma Neiworth Petshow and I am a first-year resident physician at the National University of Natural Medicine (NUNM) in Portland, Oregon as well as a board member with the Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians (OANP) and I am here today to talk with you about my journey to medicine and the importance of pay parity amongst physicians in my profession.

I was born and grew up in the great state of Oregon, right in the capital city of Salem. Every year I sang in choir in the capital during the winter, I competed in track and field at state in Hayward Field, and I graduated from Sprague High School. From the time that I was a child, I knew I wanted to be a physician to help others heal. I watched my father suffer through and then beat cancer at a very young age, and my first presentation in kindergarten was about bladder cancer and how to defeat it.

When it came time to apply for medical schools, I had my heart set on programs that included some portion of health advocacy in them, either rural health care, community health, or global health. All I knew is my end goal was to provide healthcare for those in need of it most. During that summer, I came across NUNM, the naturopathic university in my home-state of Oregon. I did not realize it at first, but naturopathic medicine was the kind of medicine that I wanted to practice. One that included all the standard of care therapies a family practice physician would learn, but also extensive studies on nutrition, exercise and movement, physical medicine, as well as other therapies such as botanical and nutrient supplementation.

I want to emphasize, that I am privileged, coming from a family who understands the college application process, but I do not come from a family of doctors who could pay my way through medical school. Like the majority of my fellow resident physicians and recent graduates, I embarked on the journey of medical school and along with that medical school debt. At the end of my five years of medical school, I had borrowed an amount equivalent to a small family home. My home is not one to live under, rather it is a doctorate degree in naturopathic medicine, my dream, my passion, my goal, and what I have dedicated the last decade of my life to achieve.

Now if this story were to end here, I would not be in front of you today. After graduating from medical school, I applied for and was matched to my top choice residency, a combination of teaching and practicing primary care in a federally qualified health center (FQHC) at NUNM. Nine other graduates and I received these residency positions and several other graduates received residencies in various private clinics around the state of Oregon as well as across the nation. Many of my graduating colleagues were not matched to residency sites. This is not because they are less deserving, less educated, or less capable of being an excellent physician, but rather there are not enough residencies in naturopathic medicine to accommodate the number of graduates in large part due to the lack of financial capital for a small clinic to afford a resident physician when they themselves are in the middle of a pay disparity.

Resident physicians do not get paid a large salary, I can attest to that. I am a salaried resident with benefits and for that I am grateful, but if you break down my hourly wage, I currently make \$13.00 an hour. This does not allow me much room to pay back my student debt, begin to save for my own clinic, invest my money for retirement, or even maintain my standard of living. In fact, many of my colleagues and myself discuss that we struggle to eat the ways that we promote for our patients, as we cannot afford it. I cannot imagine supporting a family and children with a resident salary as some of my colleagues do. Even with the low wage, I am pursuing a residency as insurance companies are basing their reimbursement rates based not only on provider type, but also on how many years of post-graduate education one has completed.

What is the issue then? We have adequate years of training, similar post-graduate education, and similar if not identical standard of care practices, why then is there not enough residencies for graduates, naturopathic physicians leaving the state of Oregon to practice elsewhere, or a continued primary care doctor shortage in the state leading to Oregon sponsored advocacy programs? The answer is simple, as a naturopathic physician, I get reimbursed or paid by insurance companies on average 40% less than my MD/DO colleagues do. That means for every dollar that a MD/DO earns for the exact same service provided I would earn sixty cents of that dollar based on a health insurance choice to not pay me the same, due to the letters behind my name.

As a young physician, my goal after residency is to move to rural, eastern Oregon and practice primary care as a naturopathic physician. I want to continue to give back to populations that typically do not get to benefit from services that a naturopathic physician can provide because more and more naturopathic doctors are switching from accepting insurance to cash based practices just to maintain their livelihood. I want to fill the void in the state of Oregon and practice as a primary care physician for those who need it the most. I am not asking for special treatment, but I am asking for equity. I have dreamed and achieved my dream of becoming a physician and with that comes a physician's level of debt. I have learned the same anatomy, studied the same cardiovascular exams, completed and passed equivalent board examinations, evaluate and treat my patients using the same algorithms and standard of care to ensure long-term patient health, and use my additional training through my naturopathic medical education to help patient's make lifestyle changes to avoid health complications.

I am a primary care physician and I should get reimbursed at the same rate as all other primary care physicians. Help me and so many young doctors like me do our jobs in the great state of Oregon by supporting pay parity, pay equality, and help dissuade discrimination for the same work.

Thank you for your time.



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