

Name: Kristen Plunkett, ND

Date: 2/12/19

Subject: Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians Pay Parity Bill

Dear Senate and Health Care Committees,

My name is Kristen Plunkett and I am a Naturopathic Physician. I would like to share my experience working with as an ND to show the importance of this profession in the delivery of quality healthcare in the state of Oregon, and the barriers that we face in trying to deliver this care.

As a Naturopathic Doctor, I was required to take all the pre-requisites in undergrad that a medical doctor is required to take. I then attended the National College of Naturopathic Medicine, a 4-year accredited university, in Portland, Oregon where I received my doctorate degree. I chose this profession because I wanted to help people get and stay healthy without being reliant of pharmaceutical drugs. I have been practicing in Southern Oregon for 11 years and work collaboratively with many other health care providers in my area. I receive referrals from primary care providers and specialists for patients that need more help with their health care needs. I practice primary care medicine seeing anything from colds to providing adjunctive care for patients with cancer and everything in between. I absolutely love what I do! My practice at this point is full and I am booked out for 2 months in advance.

My problem with practice is in making enough money to provide competitive wages for my employees. I have had frequent employee turn-over because I cannot offer them what other larger medical clinics can. When I make 40-50% less per visit for the same, if not more comprehensive level of care (we take more time with our patients and provide more counseling on dietary and lifestyle changes they need to make to be healthy), I cannot compete. The debt incurred for our education, which is a 4-year post-graduate education, is much more than what Nurse Practitioners and especially Physician Assistants incur, yet they get paid 40% more for the same visit?

Grants Pass is severely short on providers with many patients having to wait 6-8 months before getting into a new provider. If we can equalize the reimbursement for Naturopathic Doctors, I can bring more providers into our area to help fill the need.

I am asking that you vote yes on the Naturopathic Physician Pay Parity bill.

Sincerely,

Kristen Plunkett, ND

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristen Plunkett, ND". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.