

03/30/2021

Re: SB772, Support Fair Pay for Naturopathic Doctors (NDs)

Dear Senate Health Care Committee,

My name is Anton Alder, ND. I am a licensed Naturopathic Doctor (ND) practicing in the rural community of Hermiston. I want you to know the valuable asset that Naturopathic Doctors are for Oregonians and ask that you please support SB772.

Just as my colleagues do, I love helping people. I was introduced to naturopathic medicine in Hermiston where my mentor practiced for over 60 years. When I saw how much this doctor cared for those under his care and the great results from his treatments, I realized I had found my profession. I have sacrificed so much to become a physician and practice medicine in my local community; to give back to a place that made me who I am. I love connecting with people of every circumstance, and helping them both understand their medical condition and successfully work together to plan and push their health forward.

I often manage the majority of the healthcare needs for my patients, whether it be their annual physical, lab orders, health screenings or prescription(s). I also make referrals to other competent providers and specialists as appropriate. In addition, I teach my patients about diet and nutrition, how to stay active, manage stress, improve their sleep and become more proactive in their own healthcare. All of these things come together to create a more complete treatment plan for their health.

Unfortunately, NDs are not being fairly compensated for our valuable contributions to healthcare in this great state. During this pandemic I have worked hard to keep the community I love safe and healthy all while being paid considerably less despite sharing the same costs and risks as those around me. As a Naturopathic Doctor, I have come to find that no matter how hard we work and how much we help we seem to be 3/5ths of a physician in the eyes of insurance. 60% (3/5ths) is the maximum amount any insurance pays naturopathic doctors compared to other providers giving the same service. Other providers have also faced similar discrimination and through legislation were subsequently brought into a closer range more consistent with their training and education. I strongly oppose treating anyone or any group as though they were 3/5ths of anyone else. There is hard evidence of consistent discrimination against our provider type, greater so than any real or perceived differences in education can account for. This is despite our best efforts to negotiate in good faith. We, the great state of Oregon, are better than that.

These discrepancies make it more difficult for people like me to stay in practice and deliver essential and unique care that is saving lives. It also limits access to healthcare for my patients as well as other individuals and families in the community. For those of us who have been able to stay in practice, we do so at a great economic disadvantage to our peers, making it difficult to repay student loans, raise a family and give back to the community.

I am asking you to vote yes on SB772 and support fair pay for Naturopathic Doctors.

Sincerely yours,

Anton L Alder, ND