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March 31, 2021

Re: Support of SB772

Chair Patterson, members of the Senate Committee on Healthcare,

My name is Dr. Rebecca Principe and I'm a naturopathic doctor (ND). I'm writing in support of SB772 and to advocate for fair insurance reimbursements for myself and my ND colleagues. I live outside of Scappoose and until recently, I also worked in Scappoose. But at the end of this past December, after years of struggling to survive as a clinic of naturopathic doctors working within an insurance system that does not treat them fairly, the clinic I worked at finally did what is surely every doctor's worst nightmare and shuttered their doors.

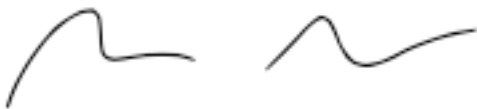
Now I no longer practice in the town I live in, and Columbia County is down another doctor. I was forced to focus my practice in Portland, and the patients that don't want to commute to see me were forced to look for another local doctor, of which there are few. When I moved out to Scappoose after finishing medical school, I had been excited to be out of the city and to serve the patients where I lived, and I was one of only two naturopathic doctors in the town. Over and over, I would hear patients express how happy they were to find me and to be able to access naturopathic medicine in their own county. These were patients that greatly benefited from naturopathic medicine, with its gentle yet effective approach to chronic disease prevention. Yet now, once again, their choices are limited.

For me, like most of my ND colleagues, naturopathic medicine was less a job choice than a true calling. I wanted to bring this medical approach into our world, and I wanted to do so here in Oregon where, thanks to the hard work of my predecessors and the vision of our state, I can work within the system as a primary care physician, taking Insurance so that my patients don't need to be well-off in order to access my

care. I chose this system. But at times my idealism wavers and I have my doubts. I've watched clinics close. I've seen doctors switch to a cash-based practice, offering care only to those who can afford to pay out of pocket. Some of my colleagues have to moved to other states where NDs can't bill insurance and don't practice in a primary care role. And there we have the irony. While NDs in other states look to us here in Oregon as inspiration for their efforts to be part of their state workforce, we here in Oregon, who can take insurance, who are licensed as primary care doctors and who have a full prescription formulary, struggle to keep our doors open and question the prudence of working within an insurance system that refuses to pay us fairly.

We have worked so hard to be here, as part of our provider workforce, and to communicate to you why we're here and what we bring to the table in Oregon's healthcare system. With the help of passionate patients and fair-minded legislators, we really have achieved so much. My hope now is that, with SB772, we can finish the job of ensuring that naturopathic doctors are here to help address the provider shortage that we speak of so often in this state. I am asking that naturopathic doctors be granted the ability to sustainably, realistically practice in the manner in which we are legally empowered. Without this vital piece of equitable reimbursement rates, most Oregonians' access to naturopathic doctors will never truly be secure. Oregonians thus need you to vote yes on 772.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of fluid, connected strokes that form a cursive-style name.

Dr. Rebecca Principe