

March 26th, 2021

Re: HB2673, Support Fair Pay for Naturopathic Doctors (NDs)

Dear House and Senate Health Care Committees, Oregon Legislature,

My name is Alicia Hart. I am a Naturopathic Doctor (ND). I would like to share my experience working in Oregon as a licensed ND delivering quality healthcare in my community, some of the barriers I face in delivering this care, and to ask you to please support HB2673.

I have been assigned as a primary care physician by Oregon Medicaid since 2016 at my practice, Vitality NW. Our Medicaid panel is our largest panel, representing approximately 30% of our patients. These assigned patients show up expecting primary care, and this is what we do for them. Vitality has worked hard to decrease vaccine hesitancy, has worked with VFC, has been on the frontlines of covid for the last year, and have continued to maintain our focus on preventative medicine in the context of family medicine. We've lanced abscesses, taken splinters out of kid's toes, wrote inhalers for asthma, antibiotics for pertussis, and placed IUDs. We've also provided nutrition and lifestyle education, signed grandmas up for v-safe, and helped food insecure families get access to food. I can provide MD, DO, pharmacist, physician assistant, nurse, and PhD medical researcher references for our quality of care.

Despite this I routinely get rejection letters for durable medical equipment, IEP and 504 letters, ADA medical evaluations, peace corps paperwork and more due to my degree. We can't find a hospitalist group that will talk with us, and the specialists we refer to have sometimes told our patients to seek care elsewhere without reviewing any of the charts that we've sent them. I spend more time on call than my conventional colleagues because of structural healthcare issues. I have less support staff than my conventional colleagues. We are doing this work for you, for our community, already at a systemic disadvantage that has nothing to do with money.

Unfortunately, NDs are not being fairly compensated for our valuable contributions to healthcare in this great state. This makes it more difficult for people like me to stay in practice and deliver this essential and unique level of care. It also limits access to healthcare for my patients as well as other individuals and families in the community. And 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 a lifelong Oregonian. My family has been here for generations, working in service to their communities in blue collar positions all over the state. I am the first doctor in my family. Despite the scholarships and the 3 jobs I worked in undergrad, and the jobs I worked during med school, I graduated with approximately 350,000 dollars in student loans. The disparity and difficulty of affording the very basics (somewhere to live, enough food to eat) especially this year, when I have worked to the point that my face has scarred-in mask lines, is disheartening at best.

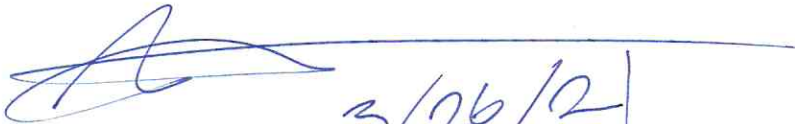
I am here, taking care of my community, the community I grew up in. I cannot afford to go on skipping lunches to make sure my kids can eat. I cannot afford the medical care that I myself need. If I leave and go somewhere more supportive so that I can survive, who will take care of these people? I lose sleep over this heartbreaking problem. I love taking care of these people. I want to be able to do my job and be able to afford a roof over my head. This is a solvable problem.

Oregon has assigned us these patients and asked us to do this job. We are doing this work.

Please ensure we get paid for doing it.

I am asking you to vote yes on HB2673 and support fair pay for Naturopathic Doctors.

Sincerely yours,



3/26/21

Dr. Alicia Hart