

Dear Senate and House Health Care Committees,

I am a patient of a Naturopathic Physician. I would like to share my experience working with an ND to show the importance of this profession in the delivery of quality healthcare in the state of Oregon.

I had a very hard time getting pregnant. I had been to doctors in my 20's and most just said I needed to wait longer for results. Life got in the way, and it wasn't until I was 30 we decided to officially try again. At that point, I went to a regular doctor for a checkup. They shared that my thyroid labs were not good, and that I should follow-up. Honestly, I shrugged at this, because my labs had been bad for years and ignored by other doctors. However, I followed up with a specialist who suggested I get a test that included a radioactive substance. To me this was a bad option since my mom had an autoimmune thyroid disease.

I tried to share my concerns with the specialist, but she just said it was the test or no treatment. With the ultimatum, I declined the test and let the condition be for another couple years. Unfortunately, the symptoms were getting worse. I saw a naturopath at 8 Hearts Health & Wellness who took the time to talk through all of the options and discuss the safety of the test. After our discussion I felt a lot better about the test and had it done. It showed I needed a partial thyroidectomy to remove a very large goiter that was almost twice the size of my thyroid.

This was a hard call for me since I didn't want to have surgery and be stuck on medication for the rest of my life. So I researched alternatives and shared them with my naturopath. She listened to my concerns, and looked at the various alternatives. She shared the pros and cons of each approach and whether she thought I would be a good candidate for it. Given the size of the goiter, she shared that she thought my best option was surgery, and I had it done. A year after the surgery, I was able to get pregnant. I gave birth to a healthy baby girl in 2018.

What a naturopath offers that is different from traditional care, is someone who will listen, has alternative paths to try, and cares about the experience of the patient. Traditional medicine only sees the traditional path, and frequently results in patients giving up on care.

I am fortunate that my health plans have covered naturopaths, though the cost is always greater and the coverage for labs more dicey. For example, that naturopath who helped me through the partial thyroidectomy had her labs declined for measuring the functioning of my thyroid 3 months after the surgery! I had to file a complaint with the state of Oregon's insurance regulatory division for them to pay the claim!

The way that naturopaths are treated in Oregon is shocking given how many people love and use them for healthcare. Please ensure they are paid at least equally to physicians. They do far more work and help those who otherwise wouldn't have care.

This is important since the longer someone waits to treat a problem, the worse (and more expensive) it can become.

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

Sincerely,

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