

Hello,

I am writing to support HB 2673.

A naturopathic physician changed my life. Literally. Thus, I am very passionate about this topic.

I don't tell this story often because it is long, but I think it is important to consider in regards to this bill.

I spent my entire childhood "sickly." I had chronic bronchitis and numerous allergies. I had gastrointestinal issues. My strongest memory of elementary school was being in the nurse's office. My strongest memory of middle school was being in the nurse's office. (I remember these offices more clearly than any of my classrooms.) I also remember that I missed large chunks of mathematics due to my absences and that I never learned many of the songs in the band because I wasn't there. I pretended to play in concerts and in marching band. In high school, I vomited just about every day after lunch and often had to pull over in the car to vomit several times a week.

This was just my norm. I was diagnosed with asthma, chronic bronchitis, frequent and constant sinus infections, frequent headaches, dermatitis (rashes and hives,) and had frequent stomach pains and vomiting. I was also constantly tired. I slept all the time and would fall asleep anywhere. I never saw an entire movie in one sitting. Nor could I stay awake in a car if I wasn't the driver.

It wasn't for lack of medical care. I had PLENTY of medical care. I had a pulmonologist, an allergist, an ENT (tried 3 different ones!), a dermatologist, and a gastroenterologist, along with my primary care doc, OB/GYN, eye doctor, and dentist. I had many medical tests and procedures.

It wasn't for lack of pharmaceuticals. I was on MANY pharmaceuticals. Looking back on my late teens/early twenties, I regularly took: albuterol rescue inhaler, albuterol inhalation solution in a nebulizer, Flonase, Advair Discus, Nasonex, Zyrtec, Zantac, Sudafed, Tigan, Phenergan, and a plethora of over-the-counter meds like Tylenol, Advil, Emetrol, Tums, etc. I also attempted allergy shots. One in both arms. Problem was, I was never well enough to get on a maintenance dose. I constantly was sick and needed to take a break and start over, so we eventually decided I wasn't a good candidate for allergy shots. It was so bad that I literally brought my nebulizer to work and used it on my lunch break. I always maxed out my sick days and had to take "Leave without pay."

I asked my doctors many times: Could all these things be connected?

They repeatedly assured me these were all separate issues (lungs, stomach, sinuses, skin) and that they were all COMMON. That I shouldn't worry because lots of people have these problems.

Despite all of the "medical care" and pharmaceuticals, I was worsening. I started with joint pain. I had increased anxiety. Solution: "Here, take some Xanax."

At one point, I lost my medical insurance and therefore could not afford all of these medications. So, I stopped taking them. Interestingly, I was pretty much the same as when I had been taking them.

Around that same time, I moved to Oregon. I had never heard of a "Naturopath." I had been a Pharmacy Technician for years and thought pharmaceuticals were the solution. I thought chiropractors were "quacks" because that is what I was taught to believe.

After spending a dinner party in the bathroom in tears, literally doubled over in pain, a friend gave me a "free consultation" card to see a Naturopath. I didn't even know what that was but was willing to give it a chance. What did I have to lose?

During my first visit, which was an HOUR long (up to that point, I hadn't spent more than 10 straight minutes with any doctors, usually not more than 5) I rushed through my very long medical history (it takes more than an hour to go over every symptom, issue, med, and procedure.) At the end of my story, I said, "I always thought that all of this is connected. That there is one thing causing all of these issues, but my doctors always say, "no."

Well, this Naturopath said, "Of course they are connected. They are all symptoms of inflammation."

Never once had I been validated.

Never once had I heard that my issues were related to inflammation.

Never once had I been given a SOLUTION instead of a prescription.

Until that day.

Turns out I am allergic to gluten and dairy, though my allergist had NEVER tested me for food allergies because my "symptoms were not consistent with food allergies." Hello? I threw up every day and had hives on my joints.

My Naturopath used diet change, homeopathy (never heard of that!), supplementation, and chiropractic care (not "quacky" at all!) to HEAL me. I spent a solid year on an anti-inflammatory diet.

During that year, I did not get sick ONCE. Literally, not once. Previously, I was ALWAYS sick. I only missed one day of work due to a fall/concussion. This was the first year I didn't max out my sick leave. I did not need my rescue inhaler. I did not need my nebulizer. I did not need sinus medicine. I did not need headache medicine. I did not need anti-nausea medicine. I did not need nasal sprays or rash creams. I still don't.

I wouldn't have believed it if it hadn't happened to me.

Now, 10 years later, I don't stick as strictly to an anti-inflammatory diet as I once did, but I am able to manage pretty well. I don't take pharmaceuticals. The most I occasionally need is an ibuprofen. I no longer consider myself to have asthma and my asthma medications have long since expired. I do have an auto-immune disease now. I saw a rheumatologist who offered me Lyrica and other designer pharmaceuticals. She actually called my naturopath a "quack" for recommending an alternative treatment approach. I never went back to her and started on the protocol from my ND and it WORKS. Not only that, but it is inexpensive and has zero side effects. I'd say that that rheumatologist is the real "quack."

Long story short, Naturopaths provide an invaluable service. They approach health from a completely different, certainly under-appreciated, standpoint. For chronic illness, I am quite confident that NDs are better equipped to bring health and healing. We NEED MORE Naturopaths. Naturopaths deserve pay parity.

My only concern about pay parity is that it will come with strings attached. I am concerned that NDs will be pressed to follow the Western Medical System's "standard of care." The "Standard of Care" did not work for me. The "Standard of Care" did not bring me health or wellness. So, I do not want NDs to be tied to that system. They need to be able to practice freely according to the tenets of naturopathic and homeopathic principles.

Sincerely,  
Sonja Grabel  
Beaverton