

February 24, 2021

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

Dear Senate and Health Care Committees,

My name is Stacy Mican and I have included a Naturopathic Physician as part of my Care Team for over 9 years. I understand that your committee is looking at Insurance reimbursement for NDs, so I would like to take this opportunity to share my experiences with both NDs and MDs. If you have not had the pleasure of seeing a ND, you may think they are all new age hippies pushing veganism and supplements. In my experience, this is most definitely not the case. My family and I eat the beef we raise, and consumption of red meat has always been part of my treatment plan.

I grew up in a highly educated household, where we recognized and appreciated the valuable role MDs play in our health and care. I have always sought medical care when needed. It was only when confronted with a chronic illness that I began to look outside the traditional medical circle. My experience with MDs is that each complaint receives a diagnosis and a medication. If the diagnosis is outside their area of expertise, the patient is sent to a specialist. In my case, I could easily be seeing 4 different specialists, each taking me in a different direction. I sought out an ND specifically because I felt there had to be a root cause to my problems. When I spoke with my MD about this, she supported my decision and referred me to an ND.

I live in a rural area that has a difficult time keeping MDs. In 10 years at a local medical clinic, I saw at least 5 different MDs. After the last MD refused to work with a ND as part of my care team, I moved to a different clinic where I assigned to a Physician's Assistant. The MDs who choose to stay long term are busy enough that they will not take new patients. I believe that quality patient care comes when the doctor and the patient work together. Developing this type of relationship takes time and is difficult when medical providers keep moving on.

During intake, a ND will look at lifestyle, exposures, nutrition, symptoms and more before proceeding with lab work or a diagnosis. A typical ND visit will take 30-90 minutes depending on the nature of the visit. I have never felt rushed at the NDs office. I feel heard and respected. With a chronic illness, I have to balance prescriptions with natural supplements. The NDs I have worked with have an extraordinary amount of knowledge. Every decision or proposed treatment is backed by studies, experience, or both. I have learned so much about the body and how a lack of nutrients manifests in the body. I have learned that white spots on the nails can be helped with zinc. I have also learned that my restless legs can be helped with magnesium and iron. I am so grateful to be able to use magnesium and iron instead of gabapentin or another prescription. Seeing an ND gives me more control over my health.

Because of the cost and the lack of insurance reimbursement, the people who see an ND are either desperate to feel better and must sacrifice to be able to afford the help or are privileged. Some of us are both. I see so many people in my community who are forced to accept a diagnosis and a pill, when they

could be receiving a more wholistic approach to their care. NDs prescribe the same medications that MDs do but provide so much more in terms of advice on nutrition and lifestyle.

Thank you for your consideration. I am grateful that I have been able to afford an ND out of pocket. It has been hard, but without wholistic care I would not be where I am today. I know because I see where others are who have the same chronic illness but who have not had the same care. I am grateful that my primary care provider is willing to work with an ND. I am truly blessed.

I sincerely hope that HB2673 has your support. It seems logical to reimburse NDs at the same rate as MDs for the same services. Doing so would open Naturopathic care to more people, especially in underserved areas and for underserved groups.

Sincerely,

Stacy Mican