

February 2, 2022

Re: YES ON HB 4006, Simply time for Fair Pay.

Dear House Health Care Committee,

My name is Vileka Fisher and I am a Naturopathic Doctor (ND). I would like to share my experience working in Oregon as a licensed ND and ask you to please support HB 4006.

I am in my first year of residency in a patient centered primary care home. While I am presently salaried, I face challenging decisions post residency. Should I take insurance? Should I exclude certain types of insurance? Should I only take cash?

I love primary care. The primary care provider (PCP) is the boots on the ground, first line defender for every patient's health care. We are in the best position to help improve someone's health over their lifetime and notice when something isn't right, and they need a higher level of care. As someone who provides primary care, I have managed a variety of chronic diseases, recognized life threatening conditions, and addressed debilitating mental health concerns. Because I am a naturopathic doctor, not only can I provide routine labs, imaging, simple and complex prescriptions, but I can also provide valuable, evidence-based nutrition and lifestyle advice. I have the time and the training to do so.

Approximately 80% of the patients in my current clinic are on Medicaid—I understand what our most vulnerable Oregonians are facing while living through a pandemic. Considering the difficulty Oregonians have accessing primary and mental health care, now more than ever, I am asset to Oregon's healthcare landscape. We need more primary care providers, not less.

However, like most health professionals, I have a mountain of student loan debt. While I want to take as many types of insurance as possible in the future, I still need to know I can pay down my debt and support my family. Without pay parity, I must make the difficult decision between addressing my primary needs and addressing the primary care needs of my patients by deciding whether I will have an insurance-based practice. It's not a fair choice. Furthermore, I look forward to using my skills post-residency as a midwife to welcome Oregon's new babies. I want my skills to be available to as many families as possible—not just the ones who are able to pay cash for my services. Pushing primary care providers out of an insurance-based practice which is accessible to every Oregonian and into a cash-based practice that is only accessible to a privileged few isn't right. Let's finally pass HB 4006.

Sincerely,

Vileka Fisher, ND, MS

Midwife and Resident Physician, PGY-1