

Dear House Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee,

My name is Anne Cuthbert. I am a licensed mental health provider and a colleague of a licensed naturopathic doctor (ND). I would like to share my experiences and ask you to support HB2555.

I specialize in working with clients with eating disorders. Though there are many diverse and valuable types of medical providers, the provider that I, above all, value for my clients is an ND. The clinical expertise and unique training that naturopathic doctors offer, coupled with the dedicated time and attention given to all concerns, makes an ND so important for someone with an eating disorder.

NDs manage the majority of healthcare needs, whether it be annual wellness visits, necessary lab and imaging tests, preventive screening exams or vital prescriptions. They also refer to medical specialists as needed, working in partnership with other providers to offer a truly integrative approach to healthcare.

I prefer to send clients to NDs due to the negative experiences many clients with eating disorders have had with medical providers that don't have good training in working with the variety of complex medical concerns of someone with an eating disorder.

Unfortunately, naturopathic doctors in Oregon are not being fairly compensated for the care they provide and for the important role they play in our state's healthcare workforce. Naturopathic doctors are paid about half of what all the other provider types (MDs, DOs, NPs and PAs) are paid for the same exact billing code and same service provided. This discrepancy puts doctors on unstable financial ground and puts access to a provider of choice in jeopardy. Naturopathic doctors are being forced to drop insurance plans to remain financially viable.

It is essential that people with eating disorders and other conditions be able to utilize health insurance to see a doctor that will best support their important recovery. Most clients cannot afford to both purchase health insurance and pay out of pocket for regular and preventive care. It's not only unfair, it's unrealistic. We need NDs to stay in-network with insurance and to stay in business!

I am asking you to please vote yes on HB2555 and ensure access to licensed naturopathic doctors.

Sincerely,
Anne Cuthbert, MA, LPC, LMHC
Serving clients in Portland, Oregon