



January 26, 2023

Re: HB 2555, Vote YES to Support Fair Pay for NDs

Dear House Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee:

My name is Dr. Kelly Baltazar. I am the Dean of the College of Naturopathic Medicine at National University of Natural Medicine. NUNM is oldest naturopathic medical school in the Unites States and has called Portland home since 1975. On behalf of future Naturopathic Physicians receiving their education at NUNM, I am asking you to support HB 2555.

Naturopathic medical education is every bit as rigorous as conventional medical education, and also nearly as expensive. We train our students to be competent primary care physicians and they complete their clinic rotations at NUNM's Lair Hill Health Center which is a Tier-4 Patient Centered Primary Care Home. Upon graduation, most of our students will remain in Oregon to start their practices and serve the citizens of our great state.

As primary care providers, NDs in OR are licensed to manage the majority of the healthcare needs for their patients, including wellness exams, lab orders, cancer screenings and prescriptions. They make referrals to other providers and specialists when appropriate, working as an integral part of the patient's healthcare team. In addition, they educate patients on nutrition, exercise, stress management and sleep quality, empowering them to be proactive in their health. This unique approach helps to prevent illness and reduce the need for pharmaceutical, surgical and hospital management. In this time of rising healthcare costs and growing provider shortages, naturopathic doctors help to fill a need, not only in our patients' lives, but as a part of the state's healthcare system and workforce.

Unfortunately, NDs are not being fairly compensated for our valuable contributions to healthcare. This appalling reimbursement discrepancy by insurance companies makes it very difficult for doctors to stay in practice and deliver this essential, desired and unique level of care. Loan payments and the cost of running a medical clinic are great. It's proving unsustainable to practice in this state with such poor pay. As doctors close their doors, not only are jobs lost, but patients lose their doctor and access to their preferred provider type. The disturbing outcome of this injustice is that private insurance companies are limiting our communities' access to healthcare, and the state is allowing it.

We are here - licensed primary care doctors, working hard to serve our patients and communities. Please helps us to survive and continue to do so by finally passing HB 2555.

Sincerely yours,

Kelly Baltazar, ND, DC, MS
Dean, College of Naturopathic Medicine
National University of Natural Medicine