

2/2/23

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

Dear House Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee,

My name is Paul Christensen 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 2555.

I love helping people. It's for this reason that I have sacrificed years of my life to, and invested hugely in, medical school and establishing a practice in my local community. Each day I use every tool at my disposal to help my patients feel better and to improved quality of life. My education and training enable me to offer both standard-of-care treatments and gentle alternatives, offering care that my patients greatly desire.

As an integrative mental health specialist, I am licensed to manage the full spectrum of mental health conditions. I also make referrals to other providers and specialists when appropriate while working as an integral part of my patient's healthcare team. In addition, I educate my patients on nutrition, exercise, stress management and sleep quality, empowering them to be proactive in their health. This unique approach helps me to improve patients' quality of life and help them to become more active in the community, at work and at home. This prevents visits to the emergency department, hospital management and costly healthcare. In this time of rising healthcare costs, growing provider shortages, and much needed mental health services, I fill a role, 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 like me 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 working hard to serve our patients and communities. Please helps us to survive and continue to do so by finally passing HB 2555.

Sincerely,

Dr. Paul Christensen, ND
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