

Submitter: Danielle Currey  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3439

The Patient Advocates for Naturopathic Physicians and the Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians (OANP) members urge you to pass HB3439 out of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care. With 1200 Licensed Naturopathic Physicians serving over 100,000 Oregonians each year, HB3439 will help improve the delivery of primary care services in our state.

HB3439 requires that insurance companies pay naturopathic doctors (ND) fairly and on par with other primary care providers' pay for the same services. Currently, NDs are reimbursed on average at half the rate of PAs, NPs, DOs, and MDs for the same services. NDs are well-regulated and licensed as primary care providers in this State; it is time our contributions to the healthcare of Oregonians is fully recognized and reimbursed appropriately. Thousands of Oregonians, including many with overlapping and complex chronic diseases, seek out the safe, effective, and integrative care that NDs provide.

Every year, NDs are financially forced to either lay off staff and close their clinics, to move to a cash model, (excluding those who are not affluent), or trade their focus on providing primary care to one of boutique services simply to make a substandard wage and attempt to pay off our student loans. This is diminishing Oregonians' access to safe and effective naturopathic care, and we, as a state, should not be complicit in this. Oregon is currently experiencing a primary care provider shortage, which will only be exacerbated if HB3439 does not advance. As a doctor, many of my patients tell me stories of needing to wait months to see their PCP and excessive use of Urgent Care and Emergency Room services for routine self-limiting illnesses, which should be managed during a regular doctor's visit. If NDs were reimbursed at the standard rates other PCPs receive, more of us would be able to provide primary care and lessen this burden on our already stressed medical infrastructure.

HB3439 has a minuscule fiscal impact of 3 million dollars embedded in the OHA biennial budget, yet the profound positive impact on patient care for Oregonians far outweighs the cost. This allocation would go toward primary care, which has been a priority of this legislature. HB3439 will not only increase patients' ability to choose their doctors but will also support the hundreds of small businesses across the state that provide naturopathic care.

Please vote "YES" on HB3439 at its upcoming hearing.