

Submitter: Jacob Panka
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3439
To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my support for the policy requiring that individual and group health benefit plans—and the benefit plans offered by the Public Employees' Benefit Board and the Oregon Educators Benefit Board—reimburse services provided by naturopathic physicians within the scope of their practice, on the same basis as services provided by licensed physicians, physician associates, or nurse practitioners.

Rationale for Equal Reimbursement:

1. Parity in Healthcare Access:

Naturopathic physicians are highly trained professionals who provide a range of services, many of which are evidence-based and complementary to conventional medical treatments. Reimbursing their services when similar services are covered for other licensed healthcare providers ensures that patients have access to a broader spectrum of care options. This is particularly important in a healthcare environment that increasingly values integrative and preventive approaches.

2. Consumer Choice and Cost-Effective Care:

Allowing reimbursement parity supports consumer choice by enabling patients to select the type of care that best meets their needs. Additionally, studies have shown that naturopathic approaches can be cost-effective and may help reduce the overall burden on the healthcare system by emphasizing preventive care and reducing reliance on more invasive interventions.

3. Consistency and Fairness in Reimbursement Policies:

The proposed requirement creates a consistent reimbursement framework across various provider types. If a licensed physician, physician associate, or nurse practitioner receives reimbursement for certain services, it is only fair that a naturopathic physician, when operating within their legally defined scope of practice, be afforded the same opportunity. This parity reinforces the principle of fairness in healthcare reimbursement and encourages an integrated approach to patient care.

4. Alignment with Best Practices in Integrative Health:

Many patients are seeking care that blends conventional and alternative medicine, and naturopathic physicians are often at the forefront of this movement. Reimbursement for their services not only validates their contribution to patient wellness but also promotes a more comprehensive, patient-centered model of care that aligns with modern best practices in integrative health.

For the reasons outlined above, I strongly support the requirement that individual and group health benefit plans—as well as plans administered by the Public Employees' Benefit Board and the Oregon Educators Benefit Board—reimburse services provided by naturopathic physicians when such services are reimbursed for other licensed healthcare providers. This policy will help expand patient access to quality care, foster a more competitive healthcare market, and promote a balanced, integrative approach to health and wellness.

Thank you for considering this testimony in support of equitable reimbursement practices.

Sincerely,
Dr. Jacob Panka, ND, MS