



Naturopathic
MEDICAL CLINIC
wellness oriented medicine

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2/11/24

Re: **HB3439**

My name is Kristen Plunkett, and I am a Naturopathic Doctor in Grants Pass, OR. I have been in practice 17 years and have primarily had an insurance-based practice. I was the only ND in Grants Pass, Oregon for many years and am well respected in my community. With the rising costs of running a practice, the rising cost of over-head with increasing wages for my employees with the increase in inflation, my practice was struggling. I was seeing as many patients as I could, with my schedule completely full but was making substantially less money. Consider how you would be able to pay your overhead if your employer paid you half of the other employees in your office. This is what we see from insurance companies, they pay us on average half of other provider types for the same level of visit. I had difficulty paying my employees what they can get paid from other offices due to the differences in what insurance is willing to pay me. I lost two of my long-term employees during the pandemic to other offices that can pay more for their services. I have had to offer more money for the positions available due to so many businesses being short staffed and we are all looking for more employees.

With working so hard and making less money than I have in the past, I had to make the decision to stop taking insurance and move to cash-based practice. Although some of my patients can handle paying me cash, I am losing the ones that are the hardest hit by the pandemic and inflation in the cost of living. I have two patients, in particular, that I have seen for over 10 years that were going through cancer treatment that cannot continue to see me due to the increase in cost with their insurance not covering well out-of-network. It broke my heart to do that to them with all the stress they are going through with their cancer treatment, but I have had to make decisions to keep my practice running.

We have lost a lot of primary care providers in our area and many patients are having difficulty finding another provider that will accept new patients. It breaks my heart to only be able to see patients that can afford to pay cash for my services. There are so many in need in Southern Oregon who cannot afford care.

Thank you for hearing this bill and please vote in favor. My patients would love for me to go back in-network with their insurance.

Sincerely,

Kristen Plunkett, ND