

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

The members of the Patient Advocates for Naturopathic Physicians and the Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians (OANP) 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 delivery of primary care services in our state.

HB3439 requires that insurance companies pay naturopathic doctors (ND) fairly and on par with what other primary care providers are paid for providing the same services. Currently, NDs are reimbursed on average at half the rate of PAs, NPs, DOs and MDs. NDs are well-regulated and licensed as primary care providers. Thousands of Oregonians 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 or to move to a cash model, excluding those who are not affluent. 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 primary care provider in Oregon for the past 17 years, I have gotten almost no increases in what insurance pays me. I see about 95% children in my practice and as a result, I almost have to take insurance to provide primary care for these children. I am paid a small portion of what an MD makes for every visit, yet I spend 2-3x the amount of time with each patient, truly getting to know them so that I can best care for them and treat the root of their problems. Without addressing the root cause, treatment is never fully effective. The cost of our education should dictate a commensurate wage to offset the very expensive student loans. If this bill does not advance, I am left with no choice but to seek a different career that can actually pay me what I am worth. I have spoken to dozens of other ND's who have said similar things. We desperately need primary care providers and if this bill does not pass, you will lose many. Furthermore, I am very fearful of attracting new ND's to medical school as we do not make what we should to pay for our loans and expensive cost of living in Oregon.

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.