

Submitter: Verenis Estrada
On Behalf Of: OANP
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3439

Dear House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

Thank you for your careful consideration of HB 3439, which has the potential to have a massive impact on addressing healthcare inequity in the state of Oregon.

As a Latina naturopathic physician devoted to serving the Latinx community, I am eager to share my experience to highlight how the current disparities in reimbursement rates directly hinder my ability to meet the growing demand for healthcare services.

My practice primarily focuses on providing culturally sensitive, bilingual care to underserved Spanish-speaking patients in our community—many of whom face significant healthcare inequities and worse health outcomes than other populations. These patients include a mix of individuals with insurance and those who rely on an affordable cash-pay membership program I've designed to make care accessible to those without coverage.

Despite my passion and dedication, the lack of pay parity between NDs and our MD and DO counterparts has created significant barriers to scaling my practice and reaching more patients in need. The reduced reimbursement rates for NDs compared to other providers not only strains the financial sustainability of my business but also limits my ability to expand services and hire additional bilingual Latinx providers. These providers are uniquely qualified to deliver the culturally sensitive care that our community needs and deserves.

The disparities in reimbursement also exacerbate the healthcare inequities my patients face. For instance, insurance coverage that undervalues NDs discourages many patients from seeking care altogether, further widening the gap in health outcomes for the Latinx population. This systemic challenge undermines my ability to build the kind of robust, community-centered practice that could have a profound impact on this underserved group.

Achieving pay parity would mean the difference between simply barely sustaining my practice and scaling it to truly meet the needs of our community. It would empower me to grow my team, reinvest in my practice, and expand access to care for a population that faces numerous obstacles to health and wellness. This also benefits our healthcare landscape at large, which is forecasted to have a severe shortage of

healthcare providers in the near future to provide care to an aging population that is growing vastly in number.

I appreciate the opportunity to share this story and hope it can help paint a vivid picture of the broader impact of pay disparities. Please don't hesitate to reach out if I can provide further details or help to shed more light on how this bill could positively impact Oregon's healthcare landscape.

Warm regards,

Dr. Verenis Estrada
Naturopathic Physician and Owner of Sprouting Health & Wellness