

Submitter: Alex Cullen  
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.

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.

#### Personal Statement:

As a recent graduate of the naturopathic program at NUNM, I am experiencing first hand the dilemmas stemming from the deficit of pay parity in licenced states. One aspect I can speak to was finding a residency position. Due to all naturopathic residency programs being privately funded, they are highly competitive and new grads struggle to find placements. The reason more residency positions are not provided is likely because attending naturopaths do not have the income to support

the salaries of new residents at their clinics. Although I was lucky to find a residency position, many of my fellow classmates were not; wasting valuable time and resources competing for residency positions that arguably, would have been a lot more abundant if pay parity was provided to our potential employers. Our board examinations are also only held biannually, largely due to lack of enrollment which limits how much money NABNE can make, ergo, they are only feasibly able to run the examinations biannually. Higher enrollment would likely fix this issue however, many people are persuaded away from naturopathy due to issues with pay parity and licensure. Needless to say, the lack of pay parity is the number one obstacle holding our field back from developing and growing. My hope is that with the implementation of pay parity, seasoned attending physicians will spread that wealth by offering more residency positions to prospective ND graduates. I believe that pay parity is crucial to ensure equity of opportunity amongst all graduating ND students, enabling the creation of more residency positions which would offer an enhanced platform for learning as well as financial security to newly graduated NDs.