

Submitter: Ashly Benson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3439

My name is Ashly Benson, and I am a licensed Naturopathic Primary Care Physician practicing in Oregon. I am here today to express my strong support for HB 3439, a bill that has been a decade in the making and is critical for the survival of naturopathic primary care in Oregon.

I serve as a primary care provider at Grain Integrative Health, a private clinic system that provides healthcare to 10,000 Oregon residents. Over 5,000 of our patients are on Medicaid, making us one of the largest private clinics in the state serving this vulnerable population. Without action, our clinic and others like us face an existential threat, which would leave thousands of Oregonians without access to primary care.

We provide the same breadth of services as other primary care providers, including preventive care, chronic disease management, acute care, immunizations, pediatric care, and mental health services. We have been recognized for our work by partnering with state organizations to bring healthcare access to the Gorge, one of the areas of highest need in the state. Additionally, we are recipients of the HOWTO grant at OHSU, aimed at fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in training future primary care providers.

Despite providing equivalent care, insurers in Oregon are legally permitted to reimburse naturopathic physicians at rates as low as 50% of what other primary care providers receive for the same services. This reimbursement disparity is unsustainable. The costs of running a medical clinic—including staffing, billing, legal, real estate, electronic health records, paging systems, and medical supplies—are the same regardless of provider type. Underfunding naturopathic primary care clinics results in fewer available physicians, higher burnout rates, reduced staff support, and ultimately, a worsening crisis in primary care access for all Oregonians.

If our clinic were forced to close, there is no healthcare system ready to absorb the 5,000 Medicaid patients who rely on us for care. This would exacerbate an already strained primary care system and leave thousands without accessible, affordable medical services.

Furthermore, as integrative medicine gains widespread public support, it is imperative that Oregonians have access to licensed, well-trained naturopathic physicians who provide safe, evidence-based care. Without fair reimbursement, we risk driving patients toward unregulated alternatives that may not prioritize patient safety.

HB 3439 is essential to ensuring that naturopathic physicians can continue to provide critical primary care services. I urge you to pass this bill to promote fairness, sustainability, and access to healthcare for all Oregonians.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Ashly Benson, ND