

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

I urge the committee to pass HB3439, allowing it to proceed for full consideration.

It is shocking to me that naturopaths can earn less than minimum wage in some circumstances, depending on the code billed and the insurer. This level of discrimination against a highly-trained, well-regulated subset of medical providers likely occurs simply because large insurers can get away with it. It does not benefit Oregonians, including naturopathic physicians and their patients. Rather, it reduces the availability of primary care, particularly preventative care, at a time when such care is critical to maintaining our tenuous medical system. Many naturopathic physicians exemplify the best of a health care system, as opposed to the more prevalent sick care system, which ultimately provides a notable benefit to our state and the nation.

Oregon has already set an important precedent with HB 2902, providing pay parity for nurse practitioners completing the same procedures as other types of medical providers, like MDs and DOs. Extending this to NDs is a logical continuation, whereas failure to pass HB 3439 would continue to perpetuate a two-tiered system. A typical patient would not even be able to distinguish a difference in care between NDs, NPs, and MDs providing the same procedure, even if there are nuanced differences in training and licensure requirements.

HB 3439 is not just about low reimbursement rates from insurance companies. NDs are highly trained, well-regulated, and frequently provide identical care to their colleagues in the medical field, yet the massive disparity in insurance reimbursement creates a severe disadvantage and hardship for independent ND practitioners. Many Oregonians specifically seek out NDs due to their specialized training, demonstrating their value to the population as an important piece of the healthcare field. Others may be assigned to an ND as their primary care physician (e.g., through Care Oregon); it is unusual that NDs are seen as equals in one case, but are permitted to be discriminated against by large insurance companies..

Thank you for your consideration.