

Submitter:	Kelsey Barnett
On Behalf Of:	OANP
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 health 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 at less than half the rate (at worst as low as 30%, at best as high as 60%) of that which other providers- mid level practitioners like physician assistants and nurse practitioners and doctors like DOs and MDs alike- are reimbursed from insurance companies for the exact same services ( as defined by CPT billing codes submitted). NDs are well-regulated and licensed as primary care providers, are authorized and encouraged to credential/ maintain in network contracts with health insurers. Payment and reimbursement from insurers to physicians occurs via submitting billing CPT codes to insurance companies. These codes define what type of service was provided to a patient during a healthcare visit. Billing CPT codes have a standard price associated with what the cost of that service is, and the code submitted should dictate what is being paid to that physician- not the "level of training" that physician who is LICENSED and whose scope of practice is defined and regulated by a governing board of medicine has. Thousands of Oregonians seek out the safe, effective and integrative care that NDs provide, and value a naturopathic physicians treatment opinion and approach. I have heard a patient describe what NDs have to offer in terms of treatment options as "where conventional medicines treatments end, is where yours begin". I rather disagree in that our roads intermix and have plenty of overlap- but this just highlights how patients are more and more desiring complementary and alternative treatment options that are not simply a prescription sent to their pharmacy, and that naturopaths are invested in our patient's health restoration and try to aim for conservative approaches to minimize the health care cost burden through preventive medicine and lifestyle based medicine - two hallmarks of our training.

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- or terminating health insurance contracts with those whose reimbursement rates are honestly humiliating

(in late 2022 I was paid \$45 for a 99215 - which took an hour face to face with the patient, though the bill was sent at standard going rate for a 99215 which is \$285- they paid me \$45 of \$285 and dismissed the remaining.) 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.

Patients who opt to see NDs as their primary care physician- by the way- are NOT offered and discounted monthly premium by their health insurance company either, so the patients pay the same monthly premium price despite the insurance company paying naturopaths far less. It is appalling,

Please vote "YES" on HB3439 at its upcoming hearing.