

Submitter: Jessica Bechler

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3439

As a naturopath in Portland OR, I act as a primary care provider and integrative mental health practitioner. This means patients rely on me for everything from medication management, to labs, imaging, diagnosing and treating physical and mental health issues, to their necessary primary care screenings, to counseling and body work that supports their nervous system health, ability to manage stress and in turn, take better care of themselves. In a one hour visit I can address not only something like back pain from a medical lense, but also get to the underlying mental health component such as negative self talk that perpetuates their back tension under times of stress. Our scope of practice is large, and I believe it to be the best kind of primary care and preventative medicine that exists. What happens later on the financial side, is most insurance companies reimburse us at the level of acupuncturists. Sometimes even worse. Given our scope of practice, malpractice insurance is high and only rising. Further, due to how difficult it is to make a living as and ND and how expensive it is to become one, matriculation rates have dropped significantly. It feels as if our profession is slowly dying. I believe equal pay for naturopaths is absolutely necessary for the survival of this profession. Otherwise NDs will end up having to convert to cash pay practices that only the wealthy can afford. It's not the wealthy that need this medicine, it's everyone.