

Memorandum

To: Senator Tim Ashe
Senate Finance Committee
From: Lorilee Schoenbeck, Vermont Association of Naturopathic Physicians
Date: April 23, 2015
Re: S.135

As an independent primary care physician, I want to thank you for working to remedy disparities in reimbursements in S.135. Disparities in reimbursement threaten the viability of independent practices. Because naturopathic physicians are a vital part of Vermont's health care system, it is imperative to include naturopathic physicians in the requirement that insurance companies pay different providers same amount for providing the same quality services.

Naturopathic physicians are recognized as primary care physicians in Vermont statute. We participate with the Blueprint for Health as Medical Homes. My clinic on Tilley Drive in South Burlington is a Level 2 Blueprint Medical Home, serving 3,000 Vermonters. We provide the same primary care services as conventional clinics. Examples include routine preventive screenings for cardiovascular disease and diabetes, pap smears and we'll child exams. We order and track mammograms and colonoscopies on our patients in compliance with age appropriate screening guidelines. We participate with the VT Department of Health Immunization Program. We are the front line and, in most cases, our patients' only doctor, responsible for the diagnosis, treatment and management of all of their acute and chronic care needs.

I've witnessed cost escalation as independent providers, such as VT Radiology, have been driven out of business, because the rates they could negotiate with payers were unsustainable. I have no choice now but to order mammograms, x-rays and other imaging from UVM, which in some cases charges several times the fee for imaging. As you know, the same discrepancies exist in all primary care and specialty areas.

Leaving us out of S.135 would impair our ability to provide the level of care management now required of PCPs and deserved by the many thousands of Vermonters who choose an ND as their primary care provider.