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Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and Members of the Public Health Committee.

This letter is written in support of allowing naturopathic doctors in the state of Connecticut to prescribe various medications consistent with their training.

I am a medical doctor, and have been licensed to practice medicine for 36 years. My knowledge of the naturopathic profession is derived primarily from having taught for 9 years at Bastyr University, one of the four accredited institutions in the United States that train students to practice naturopathic medicine. At Bastyr, I taught Therapeutic Nutrition to third-year students and supervised clinic shifts for third- and fourth-year students. In addition, I have worked with a number of practicing naturopaths over the past 30 years, both as a consultant and in the co-management of patients.

Naturopathic medical students study pharmacology during their training, and those who wish to have prescriptive rights typically are required to pass a certification examination. In my experience, naturopathic doctors have an adequate understanding of the indications, contraindications, precautions, interactions, toxicities, and dosages for the medications they prescribe. I do not have any safety concerns regarding the granting of limited prescribing rights to naturopaths. Granting those rights would improve continuity of care and decrease the overall cost of healthcare by decreasing the number of doctors that patients would need to visit. In addition, it would reduce the likelihood that a patient would receive substandard care in certain situations. For example, if a person visits a naturopathic doctor with an acute infection that requires an antibiotic, that person will receive timely and appropriate treatment, rather than having to make another appointment with a medical doctor.

In addition, unlike conventional medical training, naturopathic training includes a working knowledge of interactions between drugs and nutritional supplements and between drugs and herbs. Many people who visit naturopathic doctors take nutritional supplements and herbs, and naturopathic doctors are uniquely qualified to recognize the potential harm of combining these substances with specific prescription medications.

Sincerely,

Alan R. Gaby, M.D.