

Testimony of Anton Alder on behalf of the Naturopathic Medical Students of the University of Bridgeport presented before the Public Health Committee Regarding Inclusion of Prescriptive Authority for Naturopathic Medicine Physicians in H.B. No. 6797 (RAISED): AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRACTICE OF NATUROPATHY.

March 16, 2015

Dear Esteemed Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to address the committee about naturopathic medicine and support for the inclusion of language granting defined prescriptive authority for NDs in HB 6797. My name is Anton Alder. I live in the south end of Bridgeport with my wife and two children. I come to you today as a representative of the naturopathic medical students at the University of Bridgeport. I am the president of the local student body organization called the Naturopathic Student Government Association and a committee chairperson in the international student organization called the Naturopathic Medical Student Association. I take great pride in saying that I represent students in the only naturopathic school in New England and on the east coast. The program at the University of Bridgeport has many things to be proud of. For example, the University of Bridgeport has won the Jeopardy-like medical knowledge student competition between all of the North American naturopathic colleges, called the ZRT cup, more than any other program. The program was recently honored by hosting the 2014 Naturopathic Gathering; a gathering of students and professionals from the United States and Canada. In addition, the *UB Clinics* serve over 25,000 patients yearly. While the program is very successful and competitive, it is currently hampered by the restrictions of an inferior scope of practice compared to most licensed states, and especially those with a naturopathic medical school.

Imagine the predicament of a transfer student from another naturopathic school who has been prepared to prescribe medications, but who is now unable to easily do so and gain the necessary experience to solidify their education in the clinical setting. Imagine the embarrassment of a doctor who is able to prescribe in a neighboring state, and not in this state as though they became less intelligent the moment they cross the border. This inconvenience to students and doctors is enough to drive many of them out of state. Think of the diabetic patients who move to Connecticut having depended on a naturopathic doctor in another state and suddenly their new naturopathic doctor is not able to help them manage their insulin, despite their training in the exact same school and graduating class. Connecticut is training naturopathic doctors and shipping them off to other states, while Connecticut constituents miss out from professionals who not only effectively treat disease but help create lifestyle changes and take measures that prevent disease and save the state money. Note that this bill does not ask for anything which is not already done in other licensed states and, might I add, which are done quite safely and effectively. This bill only asks that naturopathic doctors be permitted to act according to our training and in accordance with how similarly trained professionals are being

allowed to practice here and elsewhere. We are not second class doctors, and we do not forget our training just because we happen to reside and practice in Connecticut.

Naturopathic medical students are hardworking, intelligent individuals who care a lot about others. They are willing to serve despite the many obstacles and personal inconveniences they must undertake. Many are drawn to the profession after having a positive experience improving their own health while seeing a naturopathic doctor. Others are drawn because they are strongly in-line with the philosophy which emphasizes preventative lifestyle and nutrition. Regardless, they are passionate about providing health to all those they treat. In many cases they elect to work in partnership with allopathic doctors in an integrative medicine setting. This model is particularly beneficial as each can contribute their strengths to patient care and learn from one another in the process. It is this type of ideology that generated recent changes to the governing documents of the American Medical Student Association (AMSA) and the taking of a positive stance on naturopathic students who are trained in a four-year, accredited doctorate level program.

I submit that the current scope of practice is harming the economy, productivity, and access to healthcare in Connecticut, and is costing the state money in redundant office and professional fees. Naturopathic doctors can help to cut the costs and fill the gaps in healthcare here and now and provide truly preventive healthcare. We must take advantage of the resources we already have. As students at the University of Bridgeport, College of Naturopathic Medicine we support HB 6797 because it allows us to clinically practice, including the conservative and appropriate use of pharmaceuticals agents, as we are taught about at every step of our education and learn by experience under the supervision of trained professionals, to include the indications, contraindications, and interactions that we are likely to face in practice. Remember that many people are on at least one pharmaceutical drug at any given time, and often more than one, so this education and experience is critical. We are fortunate enough to have the University of Bridgeport, College of Naturopathic Medicine here in Connecticut and why not use those who have already been trained to address the rising provider needs in healthcare? Please give these trained professionals a reason to stay and build a better Connecticut by expanding their scope of practice to match their extensive training and to help them meet the needs and desires of their patients, and your constituents.

Sincerely,

Anton Alder

On behalf of the University of Bridgeport Naturopathic Student Government Association