Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center

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**Testimony of *David L. Katz, MD, MPH,* (D.H.L.), *FACPM, FACP,* the founding director of *Yale University's Prevention Research Center* 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

From: David L. Katz, MD, MPH, FACPM, FACP

To: Members, the CT State Legislature-Public Health Committee

Dear Legislators:

I have worked extensively and closely with naturopathic physicians in every context relevant to the advancement of medicine: direct patient care, teaching, and research.

While I have been richly rewarded by all of these collaborative activities, I focus now on the first and most relevant of them, patient care.

Naturopathic physicians are rigorously trained, completing a 4-year program of post-graduate education just like their allopathic counterparts. The basic science curricula are identical, and training then diverges. Allopathic trainees are more intensively trained in hospital-based care, drugs, and surgery; whereas naturopathic trainees focus more particularly on ambulatory care, and a range of treatment modalities encompassing pharmacotherapy, nutriceuticals, mind-body medicine, and hands-on treatment methods.

These approaches to training are overlapping, and complementary. Because of the similarities, allopathic and naturopathic can and should interact as efficiently and constructively as all physicians do in the collaborative process of patient care. Because of the differences, naturopathic physicians can often meet the needs of patients when allopathic physicians cannot. They are particularly adept at meeting the needs of complex patients; providing holistic care plans; finding alternatives to pharmacotherapy when such approaches are poorly tolerated; and addressing chronic symptoms when diagnostic clarity is elusive.

Of course, the acumen and proficiency of naturopathic physicians varies as widely as that of allopaths; no level of training is a substitute for personal attitude, and aptitude. But in general, naturopathic training produces professionals ideally suited to meet the primary care needs of Connecticut residents. The overall quality of medical practice in our state, and the satisfaction

of patients here, will be advanced by offering naturopathy as a primary care choice. This should occur in a context of collaboration so that professionals in both disciplines can and do call on one another for assistance whenever warranted, just as generalists routinely call on their sub-specialized colleagues now.

In my first-hand experience, naturopaths are devoted, knowledgeable clinicians. They are well versed both in what they know, and in what they don't- perhaps the cardinal requirement of all clinicians. They have a good working knowledge of both pharmacotherapy and suitable alternatives; offer a wide array of safe and effective treatments; and understand when and why to call for consultation. Working with naturopaths for the past 15 years, I have been impressed by their professionalism, often inspired by their dedication, and much enlightened by their many important insights.

There is a need for more primary care providers in Connecticut, and in my opinion, based on years of rare, first-hand knowledge, I submit that naturopathic physicians are ideally suited to play this role and offer this service. The important objectives of access to care, patient autonomy, holism, and lifestyle medicine will all be advanced with the modernization of naturopathic scope of practice in CT, to include the authority to utilize reasonable prescriptive authority, which is consistent with current naturopathic training and competency and necessary for today's practice of ambulatory generalist family care.

With conviction, confidence, and passion- and behalf of the many patients who will be the true beneficiaries- I encourage and implore you to support this legislation.

With my respect and sincere thanks,

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***David L. Katz, MD, MPH,*** *(D.H.L.),* ***FACPM, FACP*** *is the founding director of* ***Yale University's Prevention Research Center****. He earned his BA from Dartmouth College; his MD from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine; and his MPH from the Yale University School of Public Health. A clinician, researcher, author, inventor, journalist, and media personality, Dr. Katz is the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions, including an honorary doctoral degree and nominations for the position U.S. Surgeon General. A two-time diplomate of the American Board of Internal Medicine, and a board-certified specialist in Preventive Medicine/Public Health, he is recognized globally for expertise in nutrition, weight management, chronic disease prevention, and evidence-based holistic care. Dr. Katz founded the* ***Integrative Medicine Center*** *at Griffin Hospital in Derby in 2000, and directs the center to this day- working side by side with naturopathic physicians in direct patient care. In that context, he has participated in the post-graduate training of naturopathic physicians in evidence-based integrative care for over a decade. Dr. Katz represents Yale University on the Steering Committee of the* ***Consortium of Academic Health Centers in Integrative Medicine****. He is President of the* ***American College of Lifestyle Medicine****.*
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