



Testimony presented by Bill Ehlers, M.D.

To the Public Health Committee

On

March 16, 2015

HB 6797 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRACTICE OF NATUROPATHY.

Good Afternoon Senator Gerratano, Rep. Ritter and other distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Bill Ehlers, M.D. and I am a board certified ophthalmologist practicing in Farmington at UCONN. I am the Legislative Chair of the state Eye M.D. society. I am here today representing over 1000 physicians in the medical specialties of Dermatology, Ophthalmology, Otolaryngology and Urology in opposition to HB 6797.

In 2010, this assembly, in the face of mounting requests for expansion of scope of practice by limited license providers, enacted a process by which such requests could be vetted and evaluated before coming before the legislature for consideration. That process worked well for a time. In 2013, the naturopathic profession bypassed the scope review process and submitted a request for a scope expansion directly to this body. That request was appropriately rejected, and, later that year, the profession applied for, and was granted, the opportunity to proceed through the appropriate channels as designated by this legislature.

After a thorough review of the data and arguments presented by the representatives of naturopathy and other interested parties, the report of the review committee indicated "it is not evident from the documentation provided that the current minimum licensure requirements (completion of an accredited naturopathic medical education program and the national licensure examination) are adequate to support full implementation of all of the scope enhancements as proposed by CNPA without considering the need

for additional post-licensure education and/or training in some areas “ Despite this inauspicious conclusion, an implementer bill granting significant scope expansion was passed at the end of the session, without a public hearing on the issue. To quote from the state’s summary of the bill:

“The act expands the scope of practice of natureopathic (sic) physicians to include:

1. ordering diagnostic tests and other diagnostic procedures, as they relate to the practice of mechanical and material sciences of healing;
2. ordering medical devices and durable medical equipment; and
3. ear wax removal, spirometry (i. e. , breathing testing), tuberculosis testing, and venipuncture for blood testing”

Now, a scant nine months later, with no review or evaluation of the effects of that expansion, we are met with another audacious demand for expansion of naturopathic scope of practice. The wording in this legislation presupposes an expansion and merely directs how it will proceed. Further, it proposes to set up yet another pathway for scope expansions, allowing the foxes to design the henhouse. This time, they are not merely moving the goalposts, they’ve changed the stadium!

The bill does seem to acknowledge the lack of training appropriate for this expansion in current Naturopathic education by suggesting that additional education might be needed. This, however, puts the cart before the horse, granting the privilege before the necessary skills and knowledge are acquired.

Residents of Connecticut seeking health services deserve the security of knowing that their provider has been adequately trained prior to being allowed to provide care, and that licensure signifies competency in the procedures and services provided. Part of the duties of the legislature is to ensure the safety and protect the well being of the public. This bill places the citizens of Connecticut at risk.

Historically, the legislature has found it prudent to assess the effects of significant policy changes before charging further down the path. We urge similar prudence in this case as well, and ask you to oppose this inappropriate and premature demand for even more privileges.