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Dear Senator Gerrantana, Rep. Ritter, and Public Health Committee Members

I am a naturopathic doctor who resides and practices in West Hartford at the Connecticut Center for Health.

As a licensed naturopathic physician in Connecticut I am writing to support HB 6797 An Act Concerning the Practice of Naturopathy, including support for a provision for prescriptive authority.

The Connecticut law governing the practice of naturopathic medicine was passed 90 years ago and has failed to keep pace with advances made by other states. Prescriptive authority will update the Scope of Practice definition to be consistent with standards already legislated in many states that license NDs.

If we were to modernize our scope of practice,

- We could help to transition patients off of costly medications by improving their overall health and reducing their need for these medications
- We could provide better access to natural health options which are desired by the public
- We could draw more naturopathic doctors to the state, as well as retain more University of Bridgeport trained naturopathic doctors in this state. Many UB grads leave the state to practice elsewhere where their scope of practice is more commensurate with their training.

Patients are thrilled when they learn that there is a physician level practitioner skilled in natural medicine, and paid for by insurance. They are typically disappointed when they learn that we can not provide a range of primary care services because we lack the tools we would need in our scope of practice.

Without prescriptive authority, the patient suffers. I can accurately diagnose a condition but if the most prudent treatment is a prescribed medication I have to refer to another physician, which is inconvenient at best, it wastes time, delays treatment, increases costs, and duplicates services. Sometimes, as in the case of Lyme disease, the delay in treatment can result in a worsening of the condition, creating harm to the patient. This is highly burdensome and inefficient for the patient and the health care system.

People choose to come to a naturopathic physician for a variety of reasons, which include:

- We spend a lot of time with patients listening to their concerns and really trying to get to the cause (on average 50 minutes for new patients and 40 minutes for follow-ups). This may include dietary and nutritional counseling, patient education, exercise counseling, detoxification and cleansing and more. When people understand why they are doing things, they are much more invested in making the changes needed.
- Walking with a person in their suffering is therapeutic. We provide this to our patients.
- We practice preventive medicine: prevent rather than treat illness; be proactive
- We work diligently with patients to help them improve diet and lifestyle and their overall health.
- People wish to explore non-drug options for health concerns when possible

- Our patients really trust us when we tell them a medication is the best option for a condition, because they know that we have many options for treatment.
- We treat the whole person, taking into account their entire health history and we work to address underlying causes.
- A desire to make diet and lifestyle changes which allow them to get off costly medications which have side effects and don't address the underlying causes
- Wanting to get off the ferris wheel of chronic illness and address things at a deeper level than medication
- They have multiple chronic conditions which can not be effectively addressed in a 10-15 minute office visit. A typical example is: fatigue, fibromyalgia, hypothyroid, hypertension, diabetes or prediabetes and depression. These are often the tough cases who haven't been helped by conventional medicine. Frequently they are on 7 or 8 medications.
- They have a complex health condition which is not understood by the primary care doctor or specialists, and ultimately they are offered an anti-depressant. They wish to explore other potential causes and other treatment options.

Medication would rarely be the first line of treatment by a naturopathic doctor. It would **never** be the only line of treatment. We work from a therapeutic order which increases from least invasive to most invasive treatments. Medication is tier 6 on a 7 tier scale as follows

1. Re-establish the basis for health. Remove obstacles to cure (stress, poor diet, alcohol, etc.). Support determinants of health such as diet, exercise, stress management.
2. Stimulate the healing power of nature-the body's innate healing response
3. Tonify weakened systems. Strengthen the immune system, improve digestion, decrease toxicity
4. Correct structural integrity. Heal damage to the gut, tonify hormonal systems, etc.
5. Prescribe specific natural substances, modalities, or interventions for pathology
6. Prescribe pharmacological substances for pathology (not currently in scope of practice)
7. Use surgery, suppressive drugs, radiation, chemotherapy (will not be in scope)

Expanding the scope of practice for naturopathic doctors in CT will help Connecticut residents be healthier and will ultimately save money.

Examples of successes:

- 1) 65 year old female who was getting 5-6 urinary tract infections per year. Has had only 1 infection in the past 4 years of working together.
- 2) Patient(s) with ulcerative colitis (10-15 blood bowel movements per day) which were controlled with dietary changes and allowed the patient to avoid a lifetime of immune suppressive medications
- 3) Patient(s) with autoimmune thyroid disease who avoided thyroid medication with the use of dietary changes, supportive cleansing, and nutritional supplementation.
- 4) Patient(s) with chronic debilitating migraines which were eliminated by dietary investigations, dietary counseling, nutritional support, and herbal medicine.
- 5) Patient(s) with chronic urticaria controlled with dietary and nutritional supplementation

- 6) Patients(s) with quinolone antibiotic induced neuropathy, considered irreversible, was reversed with nutritional supplementation and removing obstacles.

Please vote to support HB 6797 An Act Concerning the Practice of Naturopathy, including support for a provision for prescriptive authority.

Sincerely,

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