



Testimony of Marcia Prenguber, ND, FABNO Presented before the Public Health Committee Regarding Inclusion of Prescriptive Authority for Naturopathic Medicine Physicians in H.B. No. 5534 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRACTICE OF NATUROPATHY.

March 7, 2016

Thank you Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and Committee members. My name is Marcia Prenguber and I am a naturopathic physician and the Dean of the College of Naturopathic Medicine at the University of Bridgeport.

As the Dean of the College, I am responsible to ensure that the educational program provides our students with the training and experiences necessary to safely meet patients' broad range of health care needs. Faculty members teach and mentor these students for four years of intense academic and clinical work, training them to listen to patients, assess their needs, and develop treatment recommendations. Following graduation, our students are eager to get to work. However, we sadly watch too many of them leave the state of Connecticut, to practice naturopathic medicine in states in which they are able to utilize the full scope of their training. As the Connecticut licensing law currently stands, graduates are unable to put to use this full scope.

For several years I served as president of the Council on Naturopathic Medical Education (CNME), the U.S. Department of Education-recognized programmatic accrediting body for naturopathic medical programs. In that role I participated in the evaluation of the academic and clinical aspects of the naturopathic schools across the nation, and assessed each program against the rigorous standards of the accrediting body. This included evaluation of the training of the safe use of pharmaceutical, botanical and nutritional agents. The University of Bridgeport, College of Naturopathic Medicine provides the same education for students in Connecticut as the naturopathic schools in those states in which naturopathic physicians have prescriptive authority. Our students are ready to practice to the full scope of their training, just as those graduates in states with prescriptive authority.

Naturopathic doctors are trained to work collaboratively with other health care professionals, who depend on their level of expertise in the interaction of medications and supplements. Prior to serving as the Dean of the College at UB, I served as the Director of Integrative Care at an Indiana University integrative cancer center. My team of naturopathic doctors worked with the surgical, medical, and radiation oncologists, assessing the interactions of pharmaceutical, botanical and nutritional agents. It is the comprehensive training of naturopathic physicians that provides us with the skills to do just that. In addition to the 72 hours of didactic training in pharmacology, 171 hours in botanical medicine, 135 hours in clinical nutrition, and a multitude of hours of pharmacology covered in systems courses such as cardiology, gastroenterology, and endocrinology, students complete 2 years of clinical training and are prepared to address patients' needs, which may include the judicious use of prescriptive medications. NDs understand the mechanisms of action of these agents, the potential side effects, and the interactions of pharmaceuticals, botanicals, and nutritional supplements.

Graduates must demonstrate competency in these areas by passing the national board exams (Naturopathic Physicians Licensing Board Examinations – NPLEX), the same exams that are used to qualify graduates for licensure in states that include prescriptive authority in their scope of practice.

Modernizing the scope of practice to include prescriptive authority will provide the opportunity for NDs to meet the evolving needs of healthcare consumers in the state of Connecticut. We want to stop the exodus of our newly trained doctors by allowing them the opportunity to improve access to health care, enhance coordination of care, reduce duplication of services, and to provide care that has a reduced cost to patients and third party payers here in Connecticut, with a scope of practice which includes prescriptive authority. I am asking for your support to allow naturopathic physicians the same prescriptive authority consistent with other states that license naturopathic physicians that they may practice to the scope of their training and competency. Please support this legislation for the inclusion of Prescriptive Authority for Naturopathic Medicine Physicians in H.B. No. 5534 (Raised) An Act Concerning the Practice of Naturopathy.

Thank you.

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