



**University of
Bridgeport**

Division of University Relations

Mary-Jane Foster
Vice President of University Relations

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

**IN SUPPORT OF: H.B. No. 5534 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRACTICE OF
NATUROPATHY**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Mary-Jane Foster and I am the Vice President of University Relations at the University of Bridgeport. I am also a Bridgeport resident, a lawyer who has practiced in the city and a developer that has created businesses and jobs in Bridgeport.

I am here to offer testimony in support of H.B. No. 5534, An Act Concerning the Practice of Naturopathy.

I wear several hats as I offer my testimony. On behalf of the University of Bridgeport, I can tell you that passage of this bill and the very limited increased scope of practice it will afford naturopathic doctors in Connecticut, is critical to the success and perhaps even survival of our College of Naturopathic Medicine. We have had the luxury of being the only school of naturopathic medicine in the northeast. That will change in 2017 when a school for naturopathic medicine opens in Maryland. If we cannot provide the same clinical experience, the same patient interaction and the same employment opportunities for our students, we will not be competitive. I can assure you we will lose enrollment. Loss of enrollment means loss of revenue and loss of jobs. In Bridgeport.

On the other hand, we now have 20 years of experience in delivering exceptional educational opportunities to our students. We are prepared to grow our program and substantially increase the number of students and clinical opportunities. We have pending partnerships across the city of Bridgeport and we welcome the ability to both enhance our student's experiences and contribute to the well-being of Bridgeport residents. More students mean increased revenue and more jobs. In Bridgeport.

The University of Bridgeport contributes about \$65 million to the city of Bridgeport's economy. We cost the city just half of that in services. That's a net of \$37 million every year. As a for instance, well over \$2 million of those dollars are no fee or low cost clinic services to residents, our students, staff and faculty are often Bridgeport residents. With the rebirth of downtown Bridgeport, our graduate students are populating new housing,

eating in restaurants and purchasing goods in retail stores. Currently there are about 40 apartments downtown rented by UB graduate students. The average rent is about \$1200 per month. That's about \$48,000 a month or \$575,000 a year in support of Bridgeport's revitalization and there are food, entertainment and retail purchases on top of it. As a developer in Bridgeport, I can tell you first-hand how fragile this revitalization is—Bridgeport needs our students downtown. Imagine if we could give them even another 100 more.

Our naturopathic students spend 4 years at the University of Bridgeport completing their courses of study and doing the required internships and clinical work. The cost of tuition, books and fees is about \$25,000 per year—a \$100,000 commitment. Upon graduation, if we cannot provide them the opportunity to fully practice in the state of Connecticut, they will go elsewhere. Contrast that with our graduates of the Fones School of Dental Hygiene or our College of Chiropractic—after 4 years in Bridgeport, many, many of them stay in the region where they work and create jobs for others.

I urge you to pass this bill. It is time-sensitive, it is vitally important as a best practice and an economic driver to Bridgeport. I thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary-Jane Foster". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mary-Jane Foster

Vice President, University of Bridgeport