My name is Katelyn Bonar Zachau and I am a board certified osteopathic physician, practicing Family Medicine and Integrative Medicine. Over the last four years of my training and practice, I have been privileged to work with naturopathic physicians. I was fortunate to receive integrative medicine training during my family medicine residency, of which naturopathic physicians played a key part, as the integrative medicine principles are already an integral part of their education and training. During my rotations with ND’s I learned evidence based medicine, and was exposed to more modalities of helping patients than I knew existed, and encountered dozens if not hundreds of patients whose health and lives were radically improved due to the diligent work of the ND’s they partnered with. ND’s take the time to get to the root cause, and practice treating the whole person, mind, body, and spirit.

One of the many obstacles I have witnessed in my integrated practice is patients who receive the bulk of their medical care from ND’s find themselves stranded when they are seen for acute illnesses. When a patient has partnered with an ND they trust, they will often choose to be seen by them for an acute visit. In the cases in which they are evaluated and found to require a simple prescription, they are then forced to be evaluated all over again by another physician, typically at another location, in the midst of their illness, only to receive the prescription their naturopathic physician already determined was necessary.

By adding more steps to the patient care process, both patients and physicians lose. It adds another step and cost to the patient, and provides another opportunity for the patient’s physician to be left out of the loop, which becomes a patient safety issue. When the patient’s physician does not know the comprehensive list of medications and supplements a patient is on, the patient suffers. Allowing ND’s prescriptive authority would help to close this loop and enhance patient care and safety.

The current legislation limits NDs in a scope of practice they are proficiently trained in, which ultimately limits patient access to care and increases potential patient safety issues. Today I am asking for your support in enacting legislation that allows naturopathic physicians to utilize their training and practice, which includes prescriptive rights. This legislation will allow patient care to become more coordinated between physicians, and result in higher quality of patient care.