

Senate Bill 120: Alaska Naturopathic Health Care Reform

Problem

Alaska law severely limits the scope of practice for licensed Naturopathic doctors, and does not reflect their education and training. These limitations serve to:

- Decrease competition and drive up healthcare costs, which is one of the key drivers for Alaska's budget.
- Limit access to healthcare - particularly in rural areas.
- Contributes to Alaska high prevalence of chronic and preventable disease.

Solution

SB120 establishes a clear scope of practice for naturopathic doctors which reflects their education and training. Among other things, the bill allows licensed practitioners to perform minor office procedures (Exe: stitches, wart removal, etc.), and issue vitamins, minerals and non-controlled substance prescription medications.

Rationale

- Allowing naturopathic doctors to practice the full scope of their training will increase the number of primary care providers in Alaska. This will **improve healthcare access, increase competition in the market and help drive down costs.**
- Naturopathic doctors' primary focus is on disease prevention, rather than symptom and medication management. In the long-run, this type of care **saves money for consumers, insurers and the state.** It also decreases the utilization of healthcare (unnecessary ER visits, frequent med checks and follow up visits).
- In Alaska, naturopathic doctors have a **more limited scope of practice than other healthcare providers in Alaska with equal or lesser training.**
- Naturopathic doctors practice safely under this same scope in many other states.
- Regulating naturopathic doctors appropriately will **encourage more young practitioners to move to Alaska** and serve Alaskans. Naturopathic doctors qualify for Indian Health Service's national loan repayment program aimed at increasing access health care access in remote Alaska, but are unable to make use of this program due to the limited scope of practice.