

Tom Laing
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Re: Support for SB 70 and HB 282

Dear Legislator,

I am writing to ask for your support of SB70 or HB 282, which would expand the scope of practice of Naturopathic Doctors (ND's) in Alaska. As I'm sure you know, Alaska has a serious deficit in primary care physicians, which will continue to worsen in the foreseeable future. Allowing Naturopathic Doctors to practice their full scope of training would greatly help to alleviate this shortage of primary medical care. To me, it seems foolish, and a waste of good resources, to not allow any professional to do the work they were trained to do whether they be architects, lawyers or Naturopathic Doctors.

Naturopathic doctors have all completed a 4-year university degree plus 4 years of an accredited medical school, the same duration as their allopathic counterparts, and have passed rigorous board testing. In most Western states, ND's are board certified primary care providers. They are trained in, and proficient in all the basic sciences, conventional diagnostics, and management of disease in conventional allopathic methods as well as naturopathic treatment modalities. This training includes 1 year of pharmacology, minor surgery, and complete physical exam and assessment. All have clinical experience as part of their training.

ND's face a huge obstacle in delivering primary care within Alaska since they are not allowed to practice using their full scope of training, which including prescribing medications such as antibiotics, performing minor surgery (including mole removals, biopsies, and superficial laceration repairs). Even nurse practitioners who have much less training than ND's have these rights.

ND's have been licensed to practice medicine in Alaska since 1986, but the legal scope of practice does not recognize the full extent of their training. Granting Naturopathic Doctors the legal ability to practice to the full extent of their training will increase the number of practitioners able to travel to remote Alaska villages, increase availability to specialists when they are needed, decrease undue burden on emergency rooms, increase access to education, prevention and primary care, and likely slow the increase of statewide healthcare costs.

I urge you to support SB 70 and HB 282 I hope you consider endorsing to increase access to primary care for your constituents and for all Alaskans.

Sincerely,

Tom Laing

Homer, AK