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In support of SB 70 and HB 282

Dear Legislators,

There is a severe doctor shortage in Alaska. Many Medicaid patients in the state today are unable to find a doctor who accepts Medicaid assignment. Naturopathic physicians, who graduate from federally accredited medical schools with doctorate-level training, would like to serve this population without legal barriers.

Some of the challenges in delivering more care for less cost can be met by expanding the scope of practice for naturopathic physicians, a highly trained group of mid-level health care professionals who currently operate under a restricted legal system.

Consider the benefits Alaskans have enjoyed by legislating increased scope for advanced nurse, dental hygienists and optometrists. Chronic, and non-emergency medical, dental and vision problems can now be resolved without costly referrals.

Nurse practitioners were granted prescription endorsement because they made the case that expanding their scope of practice would better serve. This has proven to be true. There are, at this time, fewer naturopathic physicians in Alaska than ANPs and therefore we have less lobbying power. Nevertheless, naturopathic physicians, who have been licensed to practice medicine in Alaska since 1986, have significantly more medical training than nurse practitioners (doctorate level natural medical training – whereas advanced nurse practitioners hold masters level degrees).

We would like to bring our laws into line with our training. We see no controversy in this proposal. We are the most highly trained experts in preventive medicine. We are critically important in helping to change the currently unsustainable model of health care which is increasingly expensive disease management.

Naturopathic physicians offer an alternative to drugs as a first choice for medical intervention. We will always choose safer, effective therapies (such as diet changes, or plant remedies) before going to drugs or riskier interventions. However, it is inconvenient, inefficient and potentially dangerous (because of delay in service) to refer a patient needing minor surgery or a short-term legend drug remedy to another doctor when we are perfectly capable of effectively providing these services to our patients, usually for significantly less cost.

Thank you for your consideration to endorse SB 70 and HB 282, which will allow holistically oriented physicians, with deep and rigorous scientific training and an excellent safety record, to more fully serve your constituents.

Sincerely,



Dr. Emily A. Kane
serving Juneau since 1995

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