

Questions & Answers for HB122 – Naturopaths

1. What is HB 122?

This bill is designed to modernize the licensure of Naturopathic Medical doctors whose law has not been updated since its adoption in 1986. HB122 will establish a board for the regulation of naturopathic doctors, mandate continuing education, include NDs on the Medicaid roster, and allow limited pharmaceutical prescriptive authority. This bill will help to align the Naturopathic doctor's scope of practice with their training.

2. What are Naturopathic Doctors?

Naturopathic Doctors have been licensed primary health care providers in the state of Alaska for 24 years. Naturopathic Doctors diagnose and treat disease, but also focus on disease prevention, in part by spending extensive time counseling patients in health-promoting dietary choices and exercise prescriptions.

3. What training do naturopathic doctors receive?

All Naturopathic Doctors licensed in the state of Alaska have graduated from a federally accredited 4 or 5 year post graduate naturopathic medical school, and have passed national licensing board exams (NPLEX). They are specifically trained to be holistically oriented family doctors.

The naturopathic medical education includes the same training in basic medical sciences, physical exam and diagnosis as a conventional medical school, as well as nutrition, botanical medicine, counseling, physiotherapy, homeopathy, pharmacology and minor surgery. The Naturopathic Medical education includes on- and off-site clinical rotations in different settings throughout the full-time program. See the attached sheet for a comparison chart and ND training.

4. Why is this bill important for Alaskans?

- a. Continue to ensure public safety by creating a naturopathic regulatory board and mandating continuing education.
- b. Provide freedom of choice in health care for low income and all Alaskans.
- c. Help to alleviate the rural and urban doctor shortage by licensing NDs to practice with the full scope of their training.
- d. Save the state money by investing wellness dollars into children and families, particularly those at-risk.

5. Do naturopathic doctors accept Medicaid patients?

Medicaid currently does not accept Naturopathic Doctors. Naturopathic Doctors are exceptionally well suited to serve Medicaid recipients, many of whom cannot find a primary care doctor who will see them. Medicaid patients in particular tend to be complex, thus require extra time per visit for counseling and education. These patients are likely to be children. When treating children, the medical dollar goes farther because the doctor is accessing the whole family as well as helping to create wellness at an early age. Including Naturopathic Doctors on the Medicaid roster would be a wise investment in the health and welfare of low income Alaskans, beginning in childhood. Various analyses suggest, as an example, that preventing one case of diabetes could save the state \$5 million over the life of that patient. Not to speak of that patient having a much better life.

6. Do other health care professionals have boards?

Yes, it is standard for professions to have governing boards.

7. Is Naturopathic Medicine safe?

Yes, Naturopathic medicine has a proven safety record in the state of Alaska as well as nationally.