

Re: Support SB 70 and HB 282

Dear Legislator,

At the same time Alaska faces a healthcare crisis with a serious deficit in primary care physicians there are at least 40 competent doctors already in Alaska eagerly waiting to provide care to this underserved population. Naturopathic doctors are trained at 4 year accredited medical schools and in most other Northwest states are board certified primary care providers. They are proficient in all the basic sciences, conventional diagnostics, and management of disease in both Western allopathic treatments as well as naturopathic treatment modalities (botanicals, physical medicine, etc). This training includes 1 year of pharmacology, minor surgery, and complete physical exam and assessment.

A major challenge in delivering primary care to Alaska is that naturopathic doctors are not licensed to practice their full scope of training including prescriptive privileges and minor surgery - including mole removals, biopsies, and superficial laceration repairs. To be able to provide the most effective and efficient primary care to Alaska's diverse patient population, naturopathic doctors must be able to prescribe antibiotics if indicated and suture wounds when needed.

As more mid-levels, such as nurse practitioners, are licensed to prescribe medications in Alaska, access to healthcare as well as patient outcomes across the state have improved. Naturopathic doctors have been licensed to practice medicine in Alaska since 1986, but the legal scope of practice has not kept up with other Pacific Northwest states who regulate the same physicians. Granting naturopathic doctors the legal ability to practice their full scope will increase the number of practitioners able to travel to remote villages, increase availability to specialists when they are needed, decrease undue burden on emergency rooms, increase access to education, prevention and primary care, and a likely decrease overall statewide healthcare costs.

The majority of the Western states have already passed legislation allowing naturopathic doctors to practice their full scope including prescriptive privileges and minor surgery. Alaska must act now to pass SB 70 and HB 282 to increase the quality and accessibility to healthcare.

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

Sincerely,

Abby Laing NDc.

Homer Alaska

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