



REPRESENTATIVE CATHY MUÑOZ

HB 282: Naturopaths – Sponsor Statement

House Bill 282 creates a Naturopathic Medical Board for the purpose of expanding allowed practices and procedures of Naturopathic Doctors (NDs) and regulates the practice of naturopathic medicine. The board will consist of three naturopaths, one licensed pharmacist, and one public member. The board will work with the Division of Occupational Licensing to issue licenses, and will have authority to investigate and discipline as required. In addition, the state will authorize prescription endorsement which will be offered for the first time for NDs who have practiced for five years; participated in 60 hours of pharmacology education from an approved program; and met all the requirements relating to administration and prescription of drugs, vaccinations, hormones, and medical devices. The prescription endorsement must be renewed every two years. The bill mandates continuing medical education of 35 hours bi-annually, 15 of which must be in pharmacy education.

Prescribing authority will give flexibility to NDs to provide necessary medical treatment to patients. Prescription rights, which are already permitted for advanced nurse practitioners, will allow access to a range of commonly prescribed medicines that can be used in correlation with naturopathic treatment to improve patient care.

HB 282 will align the definition of a naturopathic physician with the U.S. Department of Labor which released a new definition of naturopathic physician to include job titles of “Naturopathic Doctor, Physician, and Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine.” This is an important step in recognizing NDs as qualified doctors and primary care physicians.

Naturopathic doctors are highly trained medical professionals. NDs attend a four-year post-graduate professional naturopathic medical program and are educated in the same basic sciences as conventional medical students. Studies concentrate on holistic and traditional approaches to therapy with a strong emphasis on disease prevention and optimization of wellness. Naturopathic doctors take similar rigorous professional board exams for licensure and continue educational training each year.

As Alaska continues to face shortages in the healthcare professions, HB 282 provides an avenue to help fill the gap of primary care physicians. This bill will reasonably expand the services of naturopaths and follow the responsibilities set forth by the board while providing the important services for keeping Alaskans healthy.