

TO: Senator Cathy Geissel
Re. SB 44

I am writing to urge you to support Senate Bill 44 (SB 44). This bill updates the scope of practice for Naturopathic doctors to reflect their education and training.

The changes proposed in SB 44 reflect a scope of practice that is being practiced safely and effectively by naturopathic doctors in many other states around the country. **This will improve healthcare access and help drive down costs.** In addition:

- **Alaska faces a dire shortage of primary-care providers.** The US Department of Labor recognizes naturopathic doctors as primary-care physicians
- Allowing naturopathic doctors to practice the full scope of their training will immediately increase the number of primary-care providers in Alaska. **This will improve healthcare access and help drive down costs.**
- **The recommended changes reflect the actual training and qualifications of naturopathic doctors**, who graduate from accredited 4-year medical programs with more than 4,000 hours of training and clinical rotations. This training is [on par with that of medical doctors, osteopathic doctors and nurse practitioners](#), including 1200 hours of direct patient contact.
- In Alaska, **naturopathic doctors have a more limited scope of practice than healthcare providers in Alaska with equal or lesser training.** Naturopathic doctors practice safely under the complete scope in many other states — as I have done in Oregon since 2010.
- Allowing naturopathic doctors practice to the full scope of their training **lets patients access their medications from their primary care provider without the need for duplicative appointments and costs.**
- **Alaskans face some of the highest health care costs in the nation, increasing prevalence of chronic and preventable disease, and inadequate access to health care — particularly in rural areas.** Passing SB 44 is one step towards addressing these needs.
- Naturopathic doctors' primary focus is on disease prevention, rather than symptom and medication management. This type of care **saves money for consumers,**

insurers and the state. It also decreases the unnecessary ER visits, frequent med checks and follow-up visits.

- Regulating naturopathic doctors appropriately will **encourage more practitioners to move to Alaska** and serve Alaskans. Naturopathic doctors already qualify for [Indian Health Service's](#) national loan repayment program aimed to increase access to remote Alaskans, but are unable to make use of this program due to the currently limited scope of practice.

I have been receiving care from a naturopathic doctor since moving to Juneau in 2003 and my experience has been outstanding! My Naturopath, Dr. Emily Kane, provides me with lifestyle information and resources to help me stay healthy and avoid more expensive care.

Thank you in advance for your support of SB 44, and for taking one step toward better healthcare in our great state.

Sincerely,

Linda E. Kruger
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cc. Senator Jesse Kiehl