



Natural Health
C E N T E R_{LLC}
COMPASSIONATE CARE CHANGING LIVES

February 18, 2023

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am writing to express my deep appreciation to you for sponsoring Senate Bill 44. SB 44 would allow naturopathic doctors to practice to the full extent of our training and provide patients with access to safe and effective medicine. Alaska is facing a shortage in primary care providers and we are well prepared to fill that role. Additionally, our focus on disease prevention has been proven to cut healthcare costs dramatically.

My background:

After graduating with a bachelor of science degree from the University of British Columbia, I attended Bastyr University in Seattle where I earned my naturopathic degree. My clinical rotations included the main Bastyr clinic in Wallingford, the 45th Street Clinic for homeless youth and the Redmond Community Clinic. While attending Bastyr I was taught minor surgery by Thomas Drost, MD, ND, FACS, a surgeon who had decided to further his allopathic medical training by also obtaining a degree in naturopathic medicine.

I am currently co-owner of the Natural Health Center in Anchorage where I have worked since 2001. I primarily serve patients from the Anchorage area and have also provided care for patients in Kodiak in addition to rural areas of Alaska. I have patients who travel to see me from as far north as Utqiagvik and as far south as Ketchikan and everywhere in between. While the majority of the time I am able to care for my patients effectively with non-prescription therapies, there are situations that arise that require additional treatment, such as antibiotics for a urinary tract infection, an epi-pen for allergies, or contraceptive options for a patient who has come in for her annual exam. Being able to write prescriptions for patients would reduce the need for additional medical visits, reduce medical costs, increase efficiency and allow for continuity of care. Over the 21 years I have been practicing medicine in Anchorage, I have often been faced with referring a patient elsewhere, when I could have readily provided the necessary treatment if our scope were broader.

The current restricted scope of practice for naturopathic doctors is a deterrent to providers considering establishing a practice in Alaska. Imagine having the education and training to perform primary care duties and then upon arriving in Alaska part of your valuable toolbox is stripped and left behind.

Expanding our scope of practice to reflect our education and training will only benefit Alaskans and allow better access to comprehensive health care. Thank you for helping naturopathic doctors to provide quality healthcare to our Alaskan patients. Thank you for introducing Senate Bill 44 and for your ongoing support. I urge the Senate to pass SB 44.

Sincerely,

Birgit Lenger, ND