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House Bill 115 – Naturopaths: Licensing; Practice

Sponsor Statement

House Bill 115 updates Alaska law to provide a clear scope of practice for Alaska naturopathic doctors allowing these primary healthcare providers to practice consistent with their education and training. The legislation also adds reporting and continuing education requirements for naturopathic doctors consistent with other medical professionals in the state.

Alaska's approximately 50 licensed naturopaths provide valuable healthcare services to thousands of Alaskans and can play an increased role in helping address our current primary care provider shortage. However, our outdated statutes contain vague language that dictate the authorities of naturopaths. This lack of clarity and interpretation has led to adoption of some of the most restrictive naturopathic medicine regulations in the nation.

House Bill 115 sets clear statutory guidelines to allow licensed naturopaths to perform minor office procedures and to prescribe non-controlled medications, administer vaccinations, vitamins, and minerals. Naturopathic doctors practice safely in other states under a similar scope of practice. The bill does NOT authorize naturopathic doctors to prescribe opioids, other controlled substances, or to perform surgeries.

Naturopathic medicine can provide valuable and complementary care in the Alaska health care setting for many Alaskans who struggle to find an accessible primary care physician. The ability for naturopaths to practice the scope of medicine consistent with their training would immediately expand the availability of primary care in Alaska.

Many Alaskans face challenges with chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes, and hypertension which Naturopaths are very equipped to treat. Their education focuses on disease prevention first, rather than just treating symptoms through medication. However, after working with patients using natural means, medications are sometimes needed. In the long run, Naturopathic care will provide cost savings and improved health outcomes for patients, insurers, and the state, while allowing Alaskans to choose the style of health care most suitable to them.

Please join me in support of House Bill 115.

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