

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING COMMITTEE

April 6, 2023

3:06 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Mike Prax, Chair
Representative Justin Ruffridge, Vice Chair
Representative CJ McCormick
Representative Dan Saddler
Representative Zack Fields
Representative Genevieve Mina

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Jesse Sumner

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 115

"An Act relating to the practice of naturopathy; establishing the Naturopathy Advisory Board; relating to the licensure of naturopaths; relating to disciplinary sanctions for naturopaths; relating to the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 96

"An Act relating to licensing and registration requirements for certain wholesale drug distributors; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 115

SHORT TITLE: NATUROPATHS: LICENSING; PRACTICE

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) PRAX

03/17/23	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/17/23	(H)	HSS, JUD, L&C
03/25/23	(H)	HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106
03/25/23	(H)	Heard & Held
03/25/23	(H)	MINUTE(HSS)

04/06/23 (H) HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106

BILL: HB 96

SHORT TITLE: LICENSING:DRUGS/DEVICES FOR HOME DIALYSIS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) PRAX

03/06/23 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/06/23 (H) HSS, L&C
03/30/23 (H) HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106
03/30/23 (H) Heard & Held
03/30/23 (H) MINUTE(HSS)
04/06/23 (H) HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

RILEY NYE, Staff
Representative Mike Prax
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a recap of HB 115, on behalf of Representative Prax, prime sponsor.

WAYNE ADERHOLD, representing self
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave public testimony in support of HB 115.

JEAN TSIGONIS, MD, representing self
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave public testimony in opposition to HB 115.

JESSICA PANKO, MD, representing self
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave public testimony in opposition to HB 115.

BRUCE CAMPBELL, representing self
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave public testimony in support of HB 115.

ROBERT O'CONNELL, OD, representing self
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave public testimony in support of HB 115.

ERICK MARTELL, MD, representing self
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave public testimony in opposition to HB 115.

MARGARET CARLSON-COSENTINO, MD, Board Member
Alaska Academy of Family Physicians
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave public testimony in opposition to HB 115, on behalf of the Alaska Academy of Family Physicians.

KAREN GONNE-HARRELL, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave public testimony in support of HB 115.

NATALIE WIGGINS, ND, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave public testimony in support of HB 115.

NICHOLAS COSENTINO, MD, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave public testimony in opposition to HB 115.

ALISON SALE, representing self
Anchor Point, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave public testimony in support of HB 115.

BIRGIT LENGER, ND, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave public testimony in support of HB 115.

DAVID MONGOLD, representing self
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave public testimony in support of HB 115.

LAURA BONNER, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave public testimony in support of HB 115.

CARLA HOLLINGSWORTH, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave public testimony in support of HB 115.

ROBERT MONBERG, MD, representing self
North Pole, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave public testimony in opposition to HB 115.

SCOTT LUPER, ND
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on HB 115.

CHADWICK VANCE, Staff
Representative Mike Prax
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a brief recap on HB 96, on behalf of Representative Prax, prime sponsor.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:06:14 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR JUSTIN RUFFRIDGE called the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:06 p.m. Representatives Saddler, McCormick, Mina, Prax, and Ruffridge were present at the call to order. Representative Fields arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 115-NATUROPATHS: LICENSING; PRACTICE

[3:07:30 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the first order of business would be HB 115, "An Act relating to the practice of naturopathy; establishing the Naturopathy Advisory Board; relating to the licensure of naturopaths; relating to disciplinary sanctions for naturopaths; relating to the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development; and providing for an effective date."

[3:08:29 PM](#)

RILEY NYE, Staff, Representative Mike Prax, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Prax, gave a brief recap of HB 115. He stated that HB 115 would allow naturopathic doctors (NDs) to prescribe drugs and perform other functions that medical doctors (MDs) do, with certain exceptions, such as the administration of chemotherapy. He added that HB 115 would create the Board of Naturopathy, similar in structure to other state boards relating to medicinal practice.

[3:10:17 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR RUFFRIDGE opened public testimony on HB 115.

[3:10:50 PM](#)

WAYNE ADERHOLD, representing self, expressed support for the creation of the naturopath board because it would allow NDs to practice to the full extent of their training. He expressed the opinion that having medical practitioners who can use the full extent of their training would result in better outcomes for patients. He expressed concern for having a pharmacist on the proposed board because this would represent "competing professions." He suggested having an ND on other medical boards, as the professions could learn from each other.

[3:14:03 PM](#)

JEAN TSIGONIS, MD, representing self, stated that she has had a medical license since 1981 and, as a retired doctor, provides care as needed. Because of the differences in training, she argued against allowing NDs the ability to prescribe medications and perform in-office procedures.

[3:15:40 PM](#)

JESSICA PANKO, MD, representing self, shared that she is a radiologist. She said that NDs have a place in medicine; however, she echoed the concerns of the previous testifier over giving NDs the ability to prescribe medicine. She argued that NDs would receive training for alternative types of medicine, not for prescription drugs. She expressed the belief that this would be dangerous. She expressed opposition to the proposed bill.

[3:18:37 PM](#)

BRUCE CAMPBELL, representing self, stated that he supports NDs to have the ability to prescribe medicine. He shared that he has had positive experiences with treatment from NDs in the past.

[3:19:40 PM](#)

ROBERT O'CONNELL, OD, representing self, shared that he is a retired optometrist. He stated that Alaska was the 49th state to allow optometrists to prescribe medicine, and he compared this to the opposition NDs face in prescribing medicine. He suggested that healthcare in Alaska improved when optometrists

gained the ability to prescribe medicine, and he expressed the belief that allowing NDs to do so would have the same result.

[3:21:56 PM](#)

ERICK MARTELL, MD, representing self, stated that he has extensive training as a doctor in surgery and questioned whether NDs have the proper training and experience necessary to prescribe medication. He expressed the belief that the proposed legislation would not be in the best public interest, as NDs' training is unclear. He said that he has seen good results from NDs, but he emphasized that they are meant to be "alternative."

[3:26:10 PM](#)

MARGARET CARLSON-COSENTINO, MD, Board Member, Alaska Academy of Family Physicians, stated that the Alaska Academy of Family Physicians opposes HB 115 because it would give certain procedural power and the ability to prescribe drugs to NDs. She expressed support for NDs receiving their own board. Concerning the ability to prescribe drugs, she expressed the understanding that NDs would not receive the same level of training and supervision as MDs. She argued that an ND would not receive the level of training commensurate to what is necessary for becoming an MD.

[3:28:44 PM](#)

KAREN GONNE-HARRELL, representing self, stated that she supports HB 115, as NDs can write prescriptions in other states. She pointed out that NDs can diagnose certain issues, know the medication necessary, but cannot prescribe it. She referenced a naturopath who had been able to pass the same tests given to nurse practitioners (NPs), and she shared her experience with a naturopath who had treated an underlying condition rather than using antibiotics. She expressed the opinion that people should not have to visit a naturopath, and then an NP, to be prescribed medication.

[3:32:08 PM](#)

NATALIE WIGGINS, ND, representing self, shared that she is a ND. She stated that she previously lived in Arizona, where she had the ability to prescribe medication. She described the concerns about NDs prescribing medication as "fear mongering." She pointed out that to be an ND, there would be 5,000 hours of training, including 1,200 hours of clinical training and 140

hours of pharmacology training. She stated that the first two years of school for NDs is comparable to the first two years of training for an NP. She advised that Alaska is underserved medically, and NDs should be able to practice to the full extent of their training.

[3:35:24 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked how the training hours are distributed.

DR. WIGGINS answered that there are pharmacology courses that are taken within the first few years of an ND's schooling. In response to a follow-up question, she said that pharmacology training occurred over the first two years of schooling, although she does not remember the exact number of courses or hours per week.

[3:39:24 PM](#)

NICHOLAS COSENTINO, MD, expressed concern that NDs would be allowed to prescribe antimicrobials. He expressed concern that the over prescription of antimicrobials could lead to drug resistance, resulting in harsher forms of treatment. He expressed concern whether NDs would have the adequate training to prescribe such drugs and warned that it could lead to higher rates of drug resistance in Alaska. He stated that despite taking pharmacology courses during his time in medical school, he did not feel ready to prescribe antimicrobials until he received more training during residency. He expressed concern that allowing NDs to prescribe antimicrobials could lead to public health concerns.

[3:44:18 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked what Alaska could do to reduce the threat of drug resistant microbials.

DR. COSENTINO answered that Alaska currently does not have many cases where patients would need harsher forms of treatment because of drug resistance. In response to a follow-up question, he said that drug resistant microbials usually spread throughout facilities, such as nursing homes.

[3:48:22 PM](#)

ALISON SALE, representing self, shared that she sees an ND for thyroid issues, and the treatment she receives has been more effective than the treatment she received from a family physician. She pointed out that other states treat NDs as medical professionals, and she expressed the opinion that denying NDs the ability to prescribe medication would hurt people who are faced with thyroid problems.

[3:51:06 PM](#)

BIRGIT LENGER, ND, representing self, stated that she has been an ND for 21 years, and she supports HB 115. She shared that she received a Bachelor of Science degree before completing four more years of school to become a naturopath. She stated that NDs receive extensive training regarding pharmacology, anatomy, and biochemistry, which also includes clinical training. She argued that NDs are often taught by MDs, who have experience in areas such as surgery and have the ability to pass certain medical exams. She concluded that NDs should be able to diagnose medications, when required, in order to save time and energy for the patient.

[3:55:33 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA asked for an example of a minor office procedures.

DR. LENGER answered that two examples would be removing sutures and punching a mole for a biopsy. In response to a follow-up question, she said that NDs have the ability to receive training on IUD placement.

REPRESENTATIVE MINA asked whether all NDs receive some form of gynecological training.

DR. LENGER answered in the affirmative. She added that IUD specific training would be separate.

[3:58:52 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked what it means for an ND to "practice to the scope of their training."

DR. LENGER answered that NDs would receive training in minor office procedures and the prescription of medication. In response to a follow-up question, she said that NDs receive pharmacological training, which includes time spent with an MD.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS questioned the difference between an MD and an ND's training in pharmacology.

DR. LENGER answered that NDs would focus on many of the same issues as MDs, and she added that pharmacists receive much more pharmacological training, as this is their area of expertise. She said that NDs receive more pharmacological training than physician's assistants.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked whether normal office procedures could include minor surgeries. He questioned the line between a minor and a major surgery.

MS. LENGER answered that minor office procedures would address superficial issues, such as warts or moles. She said that NDs would not perform surgeries. In response to a follow-up question, she said that HB 115 does include language defining what minor office procedures would be.

[4:03:47 PM](#)

DAVID MONGOLD, representing self, shared that he uses a naturopath for his health care, but his naturopath is unable to prescribe a glucose monitor. He said that he fully supports HB 115 because it does not make sense that his naturopath is unable to give him this prescription.

[4:05:24 PM](#)

LAURA BONNER, representing self, expressed the belief that HB 115 would be a good start in expanding the scope of practice for NDs. She said that she brought her daughter to an ND who was able to treat her entire body, not just the underlying symptoms. However, her daughter had to visit a pediatrician to receive antibiotics for an illness diagnosed by the ND. She expressed the opinion that traditional and naturopathic medicine should be complementary. She expressed uncertainty concerning whether NDs should be able to prescribe all types of drugs; however, she suggested that there is room for NDs to prescribe certain types of medication.

[4:08:50 PM](#)

CARLA HOLLINGSWORTH, representing self, expressed the opinion that giving NDs the ability to prescribe medication would reduce health care costs in the state by decreasing the number of

appointments needed to receive prescription medication. She observed that NDs in other states are able to prescribe medication and practice to the full scope of their abilities and training. She continued that NDs place an emphasis on prevention, and their level of knowledge surpasses that of NPs. she suggested that NDs would be less likely to overprescribe unnecessary medication. She said that her naturopath had diagnosed her post-birth anxiety; however, she had to see another medical professional in order to receive the necessary medication for treatment. She suggested that allowing NDs to practice to the full extent of their training would reduce the health care provider shortage in Alaska.

[4:13:41 PM](#)

ROBERT MONBERG, MD, representing self, commented that people receive treatment in a variety of ways, and both NDs and MDs have a place in the healthcare system. He acknowledged that NDs are able to provide quality care; however, he expressed concern that NDs do not receive the level of training necessary to properly prescribe medication.

[4:16:52 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR RUFFRIDGE, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony.

[4:17:14 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS questioned the definition of "minor office procedures" in the proposed legislation.

[4:18:15 PM](#)

SCOTT LUPER, ND, answered that minor office procedures would deal with superficial issues. He stated that this would not include cutting through the skin into body cavities, ligaments, tendons, or the eyes. He added that primary care physicians do not perform surgical procedures. He noted some misconceptions about naturopathic practice during public testimony, and he expressed the opinion that NDs have a strong track record of safe treatment when acting as primary care doctors. He stated that alternative treatments are often successful, but in certain cases there are no substitutes for prescription medications. He stated that NDs must send their patients to a second doctor when such cases occur. He pointed out that evidence brought forward

shows that NDs would have the training and knowledge required to prescribe medication.

[4:24:00 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that HB 115 was held over.

[4:24:07 PM](#)

The committee took two consecutive at-eases from 4:24 p.m. to 4:26 p.m.

HB 96-LICENSING:DRUGS/DEVICES FOR HOME DIALYSIS

[4:26:04 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 96, "An Act relating to licensing and registration requirements for certain wholesale drug distributors; and providing for an effective date."

[4:26:40 PM](#)

CHADWICK VANCE, Staff, Representative Mike Prax, Alaska State Legislature, stated that HB 96 would allow distributors to send dialysis medications directly to the patients who need them.

[4:27:35 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR RUFFRIDGE opened public testimony on HB 96. After ascertaining that there was no one who wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[4:28:17 PM](#)

Chair PRAX stated that, despite the language in the bill sounding complicated, the drugs referenced by HB 96 are not "exotic drugs."

[4:29:53 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that HB 96 was held over.

[4:30:02 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.