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Testimony on behalf of the Michigan Association of Naturopathic Physicians (MANP) and their licensing bill (House Bill 4531)

Testimony of Supak Sookkasikon, MD

April 19, 2016

Chairman Callton and distinguished members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to share my support for the Michigan Association of Naturopathic Physicians in pursuing licensure in the state of Michigan

My name is Dr. Supak Sookkasikon. I am a practicing physician board certified in both family medicine and integrative medicine. I have a BS in Microbiology from University of California, finished medical school in Cambridge England and finished residency at the University of Michigan. After residency, I pursued a fellowship in Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona because I wanted to offer my patients more than just procedures and supplements. Most of my patients were using some kind of alternative therapy and I felt it was my duty to educate myself on these practices.

Currently, I am owner and medical director of Emcura Medical and Emcura Immediate Care. Also, I am a clinical assistant professor at the College of Osteopathic Medicine at Michigan State University and am teaching faculty at the Beaumont Center for Integrative Medicine. As a practicing integrative medicine physician, I work with many CAM providers including NDs.like Dr. Jen Green who is a naturopathic oncologist in our practice. I see patients who seek a blend between both integrative and conventional medicine. I have worked closely with NDs for the past 3 years as a supervising physician. I accept their referrals and also refer to them.

People in Michigan are very interested in using natural medicine to improve their health. Patients do not only want to be prescribed a medication; they are looking for more control of their health with lifestyle changes and more natural practices. We see a very high demand for this at our clinic, and we see firsthand what an important resource a Naturopathic Doctor is to our care team. For example, when we have questions about an herb we've never heard of, or if we want to know if there's a study about a supplement, we consult Dr. Jen Green. Evidence based medicine is very important to me. I often ask Dr. Green about case studies on alternative treatments and supplements. At our clinic, she provides specialty care but also general medical care for patients who otherwise feel alienated by the allopathic medical system.

One of the most important concepts I can teach my medical students is to realize when it is important to ask for help or to refer. Dr. Green and I have open communication, so I experience how well she cares for her patients. She refers them directly to us when she suspects something serious is going on. For example, she saw a patient with abdominal pain and ascites. She recognized that there was more than a benign process. She referred the patient to my partner who diagnosed her with ovarian cancer. Open communication is important when we share patients who seek both conventional and alternative care.

At our clinic, we especially believe in preventative medicine and that's something that Naturopathic Medicine is particularly good at. It helps prevent some of the chronic diseases that are so costly for our society – like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and mental health problems. There was actually a study of over 2500 older adults who saw a Naturopathic Physician, and the top five things they wanted help with were: fatigue, anxiety, diabetes, diarrhea, and

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depression. These are all chronic issues where a preventative approach with natural medicine makes sense. Well trained NDs could help provide this care. We would be lucky to have more highly trained Naturopathic Doctors practicing in Michigan to do this work, especially considering the shortage of primary care physicians we face.

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Thank you,

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