

Abigail Ellsworth Testimony in Support of House Bill 4531

Thank you, Chairman Callton and members of the Health Policy Committee. My name is Dr. Abigail Ellsworth and I am a Naturopathic Physician, Acupuncturist and the President of the Michigan Association of Naturopathic Physicians. I currently practice in Traverse City and Benzie County, where Evidence Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine (EBCAM) is in high demand. I grew up down the road, in Okemos, Mi, completed my undergraduate degree at University of Wisconsin-Madison and my Masters in Marine Biology (focus on reproductive endocrinology) at University of Alaska-Fairbanks. After working in the field of research for six years, I returned to the lower 48, and completed a Masters in Oriental Medicine and Doctorate of Naturopathic Medicine at National College of Natural Medicine, in Portland, OR, a 4 year post-bachelor Naturopathic program, accredited by the Council on Naturopathic Medical Education (CNME), the only accrediting body recognized by the US Department of Education.

In addition to the approximately 4000 hours of didactic training Naturopathic Physicians receive in basic biomedical sciences and clinical instruction in internal medicine, dermatology, neurology, gynecology, obstetrics and ophthalmology, we also complete over 1000 hours in Naturopathic therapeutics (botanical medicine, clinical nutrition, physical medicine, etc) and over 1200 hours of clinical training under the supervision of licensed NDs, MDs, DOs and DCs, qualifying Naturopathic Physicians as highly trained in safe and effective integrative medicine.

All Naturopathic Physicians complete Naturopathic Physicians Licensing Exams (NPLEX), which consist of a Biomedical Science exam (completed after the second year of didactic coursework) and a Core Clinical Science exam (completed after clinical training and graduation). NPLEX is 30 years old, uses the modified Angoff method (the same method as MDs, DOs, DCs and Nurses) of statistical determination of the pass rate and uses rotating practice analysis to keep examination content accurate and up-to-date. NPLEX prepares the examinations and NABNE administers the examination and establishes criteria in concert with CNME, our accrediting organization, with respect to candidate eligibility.

Naturopathic Physicians are currently licensed in 18 states, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. In the states we are licensed, we act as primary care and experts in EBCAM. Since there is not currently regulation of Naturopathic Physicians in Michigan, I hold a license in Vermont, where I have formulary prescribing capabilities, and complete continuing education, a portion of which must be in pharmacology. This means I am paying annual licensing fees that could be paid to Michigan to another state, which I would very much like to change.

As a newly graduated Naturopathic Physician, previous President, VP-Education and Integrative Medicine Chair of the Naturopathic Medical Student Association (NSMA, the only professional organization representing all Naturopathic Medical Students in North America), and a founding member of the Naturopathic Medical Advisory Board within the American Medical Student Association (AMSA), I have a current grasp on the perspective of many of our future healthcare

providers. There are future NDs who want to practice in Michigan, and future MDs and DOs that want to work with NDs in this state to meet the growing patient demand for EBCAM. Currently, the lack of licensure in this state is prohibitive to many prospective clinically trained NDs establishing practices here. Passage of HB4531 would remove this obstacle to allow for an influx of more highly trained integrative health providers who are experts in EBCAM. Because we would be the first centrally, Midwestern state to be licensed, there would be incentive for prospective Naturopathic graduates to move to Michigan (as indicated by the letter provided, which is representative of just one accredited Naturopathic Medical Program).

Thank you all for hearing our testimonies this morning, and please feel free to follow up with us regarding any questions you might have.