



May 3, 2016

The Honorable Mike Callton
House Health Policy Committee
519 Anderson House Office Building
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Chairman Callton and members of the House Health Policy Committee:

On behalf of the Michigan Academy of Family Physicians—which represents over 4,000 Family Physicians, Family Medicine residents and students serving over a million patients statewide—I write today to express our concerns with House Bill (HB) 4531, as written.

Specifically, our concerns stem from the theory and practice of naturopathy, which is not based upon the body of basic knowledge related to health, disease, and health care widely accepted by the scientific community. The distinctive philosophy of naturopathic medicine and many of its methods of diagnosis and treatment are unscientific in concept, biologically improbable and clinically unproven. Moreover, the scope and quality of naturopathic education do not prepare the practitioner to properly and accurately diagnose illness, provide appropriate treatment, to safely or effectively prescribe medications, or perform surgical procedures, as HB 4531 would allow them to do. While you may hear claims that a naturopath is exposed to a standard medical curriculum, their education and training amounts to just a small fraction of what medical doctors undergo. Naturopaths are not required to complete a four-year residency program, which entails the vast majority of a medical doctor's exposure to clinical training and direct patient care.

We also have concerns that the government endorsement of naturopaths through licensure gives patients a false sense of legitimacy around some of their practices. For example, naturopathic teaching claims that natural herbal remedies are generally superior to pharmaceuticals in the treatment of most diseases, yet the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) forbids manufacturers of herbal preparations and dietary supplements from making therapeutic claims. Are patients aware of this? Perhaps of most concern is the risk of failure of naturopathic practitioners to diagnose in a timely fashion or delay referring patients for appropriate medical treatment, endangering the health and safety of patients with serious diseases who are relying solely on care from these professionals. In addition, such treatments may divert patients away from proven therapies that can provide real benefits; potentially leading to more costly care down the road or worse if/when a condition grows more severe. These diversions only serve to compromise our health care system at a time when our state is working to improve the quality and safety of healthcare.

In the interest of patient safety and the promotion of quality, evidence-based care, we respectfully ask that you oppose House Bill 4531, as written. Thank you for your consideration of these concerns.

Sincerely,

Loretta Leja MD

Loretta Leja, MD
Chair, MAFP Advocacy Committee