

SB 2274 Naturopathic Scope Bill
Lezlie Link, ND
House Human Services Committee
March 23rd, 2021

Good Morning Chairman Weisz and Members of the House Human Service Committee. My name is Lezlie Link. I am a Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine, also known as an ND, from Bismarck. I am in support of the naturopathic scope expansion bill. I have been co-prescribing pharmaceutical drugs since my doctorate graduation in 2009. After finishing my graduate education, I started my naturopathic family residency program at Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine in Tempe, Arizona. In my nationally accredited residency program, I oversaw the patient management of pharmaceuticals, targeted dietary interventions, lifestyle counseling, and botanical medicines alongside my attending physicians. In addition to the 2400+ patients I saw during my naturopathic medical training, I saw an additional 1200 patients. During my post-graduate residency, I oversaw the diagnostic skills, laboratory evaluation, and pharmaceutical prescribing and of 3rd and 4th year students. The residency allowed me to rotate within the Maricopa County Hospital System at their Guadalupe Community Health Center. Within the Maricopa County system, I was responsible for seeing 15-20 patients/half day which included the conventional diagnosis and standards of care of many primary care conditions such as type II diabetes, hypertension, and acute care.

After my residency ended, I was tasked to oversee the clinical development and training of naturopathic, osteopathic, and medical students at Mission of Mercy. Mission of Mercy is a multistate faith-based community organization providing healthcare to the uninsured and underinsured. At MOM, my colleagues included volunteer community providers (MDs and DOs) and we evaluated and triaged an average of 200 patients a day starting at 730 in morning. We performed in house lab testing and dispensed necessary patient medications for hypertension, elevated cholesterol, diabetes, acute and chronic infections, wound management, suturing, and if necessary, sent patients to Walmart for \$9 prescriptions.

My graduate education prepared me for these experiences. I knew what questions to ask the patient, the pertinent physical exam to perform, and the standard of care guidelines before working in these facilities. These experiences didn't add to what I already knew, they taught me to be a fast decision maker and be able to see patients quickly.

In 2011, the naturopathic licensure bill passed in North Dakota with overwhelming Senate and House support and I decided that my life in Arizona as great as it was, was coming to close. I was being called home and I knew my skill set could benefit the great state of North Dakota. Honestly, I was hesitant to come back, although my family was and is all here in ND, I knew that there would be limitations to my scope of work in the state. I knew I was making a personal and professional sacrifice. I was fortunate to found Core Health Strategies in Bismarck with an open-minded internist and radiation oncologist, Glen Hyland, MD. Over the past 9 years, I have been allowed the opportunity to continue to prescribe and monitor medications under my practice partner's license. He's seen firsthand, my diagnostic and clinical decision making, lab and imaging interpretation prescribing recommendations, and specialty referrals. He'd be here today if it wasn't for post covid-19 complications. As great as our relationship is, prescribing

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under Dr. Hyland's license puts liability on him when I should be the one carrying the liability. Naturopathic doctors carry malpractice insurance and prescription writing is covered under our plans. Traditionally, naturopathic doctors have minimal malpractice premiums due to fewer disciplinary actions.

As of 2006, in states that allow naturopathic doctors to prescribe, there were no reported complaints related to patient harm or disciplinary action due to naturopathic doctor prescribing, nor were there any civil actions against naturopathic doctors for prescribing. NCMIC Insurance Company, which insures naturopathic doctors in all licensable states, stated: "In the five years that NCMIC has been insuring Naturopathic Physicians and the colleges we have never opened a claim against a Naturopathic Physician involving prescription medications." Additionally, Jury Verdicts Northwest, a legal database which records court cases in Washington and Oregon, the two states with the greatest number of naturopathic doctors and the longest histories of licensure (since 1919 and 1927, respectively), found no cases against naturopathic doctors for prescription negligence and reports that "for that matter our database contained no cases against naturopaths at all."

I recommend a do pass on SB 2274.

Thank you for time,

Lezlie Link, ND

If you have follow-up questions, please email dr.lezlielink@gmail.com.

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SOURCES:

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