

March 3, 2020

Delegate Shane Pendergrass, Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
241 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HOUSE BILL 937 – NATUROPATHIC DOCTORS – FORMULARY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP, FORMULARY CONTENT, AND SCOPE OF PRACTICE

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Committee Members:

My name is Dr. Kevin Passero and I am a licensed Naturopathic Doctor in the State of Maryland and a licensed Naturopathic Physician in the District of Colombia. I have been licensed in Maryland since initial licensure was first made available and licensed in the District for over 10 years. I currently serve as the Chairman of the Naturopathic Advisory Committee which operates under the Maryland Board of Physicians and served as the Past President of the Maryland Association of Naturopathic Doctors.

I am here today to show my support for our bill to expand access to a limited range of prescription medications for Naturopathic Doctors in the State of Maryland. Being licensed in both DC and Maryland is a unique experience since the scope of practice laws in these two jurisdictions differ considerably. Most notably, the District of Colombia grants licensed Naturopathic Physicians the authority to prescribe a limited range of prescription medication to support patient care in the context of common naturopathic practice. Having such a large discrepancy of practice regulations in such a small geographic location is quite a dichotomy and often confusing to patients.

As expected, my District of Columbia office and Annapolis office service patients from the entire metro region including DC, Virginia, Delaware and Maryland. Patients that need a prescriptive therapy not authorized under the current Maryland statute must drive into DC in order to receive that care if they wish to do so with the guidance of a Naturopath. While they have the option to seek that same care from a licensed provider in Maryland, many opt to drive into the District to receive the care under a Naturopathic Doctor. This is primarily because Naturopathic Doctors offer a sought-after model of care primarily rooted in addressing medical issues through healthy living, lifestyle improvements and medicinal substances derived from nature. They seek the guidance of a provider that aims to minimize the reliance on prescription medications when possible and instead support the body through health practices and modalities that minimize potentially harmful side effects. And even when prescribing, it is understood that Naturopathic doctors will approach medication-based interventions very cautiously.

Through this bill, we are seeking to engage in a process that involves all relevant stakeholders in the landscape of medical care in Maryland to provide input regarding a starting list of prescription medications for use in Naturopathic care. This process is to be overseen by the Board of Physicians. This procedure is similar to the successful process enacted by the District of Colombia over 8 years ago and modeled in many other states. Even in states where Naturopathic Doctors have very broad prescribing authority, malpractice claim rates against Naturopathic Doctors are the lowest amongst all professionals with prescribing authority demonstrating their cautious approach to care and record of safety.