

MedChi

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TO: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Susan W. Krebs

FROM: J. Steven Wise
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
Danna L. Kauffman

DATE: February 4, 2021

RE: **OPPOSE** – House Bill 219 – *Naturopathic Doctors - Formulary Council Membership, Formulary Content, and Scope of Practice*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, **opposes** House Bill 219.

House Bill 219 would allow naturopathic doctors to prescribe prescription drugs (but not CDS). This legislation has been introduced for several years but never has been adopted by the Committee. MedChi's reasons for opposing the bill are the same as they have been since this legislation was originally introduced.

First, unlike physicians, naturopaths do not complete a residency upon finishing school. This is a major difference between the two areas of practice. Physicians typically complete an additional 3-7 years of training after medical school known as a residency, where they learn how to assess patients before prescribing prescription drugs, the effect of prescription drugs on patients, and the interaction of various prescription drugs. Naturopathic doctors receive none of this additional training, yet this legislation would allow them to do exactly what physicians do. From a patient safety perspective, this is dangerous.

Second, when the law allowing naturopathic doctors to be licensed in Maryland passed in 2014, prescription drugs were expressly excluded. The law licensing naturopathic doctors passed in 2014 on the premise that it was a complementary form of treatment to traditional medicine. It was never intended to be a substitute for or the same as traditional medicine. This is why the law specifies that naturopathic doctors must collaborate with and refer patients to physicians when the patient's health requires. The General Assembly recognized a clear line between naturopathic medicine and traditional medicine, and this bill crosses it.

The Report of the Naturopathic Formulary Council, issued in July of 2015, recommended that naturopathic doctors *not* be permitted to prescribe prescription drugs. Nothing has changed since then to justify what is proposed in this legislation.

The naturopathic doctors argue that the bill still allows the Board of Physicians to reject any addition to the naturopathic formulary. This is correct, but it is our view that the training of naturopathic doctors is

insufficient to justify granting the Board this authority.

For these reasons, MedChi asks the committee to vote against this legislation.

For more information call:

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