



What's in The Bill LRB2336

The Wisconsin Naturopathic Doctors Association seeks licensure for the profession, joining half of the country that already regulates naturopathic medicine. Without licensure, the State of Wisconsin limits primary care options for its residents, allows a dangerous amount of freedom for someone who wishes to label themselves as a legitimate doctor, and inhibits portability for Naturopathic Doctors, removing incentive for doctors to establish practices and employ Wisconsinites.

ISSUE:

Without licensing, legitimate Naturopathic Doctors are unable to fully serve those who seek out their care. Additionally, the lack of licensing creates a legal loophole in which any person, educated or not, can masquerade as a legitimate health professional. There are no other health professions in the state with these same potentially dangerous loopholes. Wisconsinites would like to choose Naturopathic Doctors as their primary care providers but cannot without licensure. Licensure increases access to primary care providers and expands employment opportunities for Naturopathic Doctors and staff.

BENEFITS OF LICENSING:

With the ongoing primary care shortage, particularly in rural areas, licensing Naturopathic Doctors will increase access to legitimate providers. To better serve Wisconsinites, licensed Naturopathic Doctors can act as the first contact point into the medical system, help coordinate appropriate referrals and establish a working doctor-patient relationship. As it is currently without licensure, patients of Naturopathic Doctors are frequently having to spend additional money and time for their healthcare needs. Licensing Naturopathic Doctors saves healthcare dollars, time, and hassle for Wisconsinites.

Naturopathic Doctors are primary care providers who are uniquely trained in both natural and conventional medicine. Naturopathic Doctors are experts in drug/herb/nutrient interactions. When necessary, Naturopathic Doctors refer patients to other MDs for specialized care. Because of the close relationship with other healthcare providers, the most recent states that have licensed Naturopathic Doctors, including Maryland and New Mexico, have had full support from the state medical societies.

THIS PROPOSED LEGISLATION WILL:

- Create a Naturopathic Medicine Examining Board analogous to examining boards, such as the Dental Examining Board, or Physical Therapy Examining Board. The board determines and upholds the ethical standards of the practice of naturopathic medicine.
- Define the investigation of credible allegations of fraud and the disciplinary process.
- Instill public trust that anyone calling themselves a Naturopathic Doctor has completed pre-med undergraduate requirements, followed by a four-year Naturopathic Medical program from an institution accredited by the U.S. Department of Education.
- Ensure the competency of naturopathic doctors establishing minimum educational requirements, examinations, and continuing education requirements.
- Define the qualifications, practice, and scope of a Naturopathic Doctor
 - Scope of practice
 - Diagnose and treat
 - Conduct physical exams
 - Order and interpret labs and imaging
 - Diet and lifestyle counseling
 - Use of naturopathic therapeutics, which include nutritional therapy, herbs, vitamins, and minerals
 - Prescribe medications consistent with primary care and general family medical practice.
- Under the scope of the licensing, there are no restrictions on natural health practitioners (for example, nutrition counselor, health coach, natural product retailer, or herbalist) who sell vitamins and supplements. This is not a "fence-me-out" bill, this is strictly regulation of Naturopathic Doctors.
- Naturopathic Doctors are independent providers who routinely collaborate in care with and refer to other medical providers.
- Licensure allows Naturopathic Doctors to get malpractice insurance.

What this bill does not allow Naturopathic Doctors to do:

- Hospital based medicine
- Prescribe Act I, II and some Act III controlled substances.
- Perform general surgery
- Spinal anesthetics

The practice and licensing of Naturopathic Medicine is not new. Twenty-four state licensing agencies recognize Naturopathic Doctors in the US, with more legislation being passed each year. Arizona has licensed Naturopathic Doctors since 1935. The majority of Naturopathic Doctors are small business owners and employers, in private practice clinics distributed in both urban and rural communities.

We urge you to sign on to LRB2336 to ensure the healthcare choices for Wisconsinites remain ample and safe.