

Melissa Hall
Hope
LD 1128

To whom it may concern:

I am writing today to whole-heartedly support the rights of Naturopathic Doctors in Maine (and everywhere!), and especially provide support of LD 1128 “An Act to Modernize the Formulary for Naturopathic Doctors”.

I can honestly say that I owe my life to my ND. Several times in my life she was the only one that could figure out what was going on with me and could help me get well.

I have had a bit of a unique situation where I established a great relationship with an amazing ND in NYC, but then moved to Maine, which added complexity to my care. Once I moved to Maine I found it difficult to find one doctor that would be able to manage my various issues, or that treated me like an individual. I am now grateful that this amazing ND resides in Maine and continues my care. She is the only health provider I trust completely, and the one I go to first for anything.

I have been under the care of my current ND for 18 years. At this point in my life (age 52) I trust my ND more than any other practitioner and would follow any of her instructions. I base this on almost two decades of her being thorough and detailed, always letting me know what she thought the issue was, what she felt would remedy that, what the positive and negative aspects of that treatment are, as well as what I can expect moving forward. I have always received a detailed written treatment plan and have always had confidence that she kept all supplements and medications as well as diet in mind when recommending or prescribing something new. I have always felt cared for and understood – and this is something I have not found in any other practitioner.

SHE EXCELS AT COMPLEX WHOLISTIC CARE. I was diagnosed with Hashimoto thyroiditis 25 years ago. At the beginning I had my PCP manage it, then an endocrinologist, but I never felt great. My test results would go up and down, and I would receive no explanation. Or there were times when my labs were “in range” but I was having many hypothyroid symptoms, but these were simply dismissed because my TSH was “fine”. I once even had an MD break up with me via certified letter because I had too many questions – despite her telling me she was focused on women’s health and autoimmune issues and was willing to manage my thyroid. In addition to my thyroid condition, I had developed other autoimmune issues and ailments. I went from top doctor to top specialist in NYC, underwent sinus surgeries, rounds of antibiotics and remained sick for over ten years. I still remember my ENT giving me a hug, saying I had the thickest file in his office, and that he didn’t think there was anything else he could do for me – maybe I should move to a place with cleaner air. This was after he had referred me to his mentor, the top ENT at a top hospital in NYC. I had his direct cell phone number. Yet, I still was really sick all the time. Looking back, none of these various doctors consulted with each other. None of them asked me about diet or lifestyle.

After a decade of sickness, multiple surgeries and all sorts of antibiotics and medications, I found an ND and it was life changing. She looked at me as a whole, took a deep dive into my past and my genetics, my lifestyle, my diet and very quickly had ideas of why I had been so sick for so many years. We made simple changes to my diet, lifestyle and treatment - and my health quickly improved. My migraines disappeared. My arthritis vanished. My thyroid stabilized. I no longer had frequent debilitating sinus infections (and haven’t for the past 18 years!). I lost weight and finally felt like myself again! I loved my ENT, Endo, PCP, Allergist, but none of them looked at me as a whole, coordinated my care, or even knew what to do. And not one of them were willing to coordinate care with the ND – the only person in ten years that actually improved my health.

THE ONLY PERSON THAT TRULY UNDERSTANDS THYROID AND

ENDOCRINE ISSUES. My naturopathic doctor has managed my thyroid for 18 years and is more knowledgeable than any other practitioner. The issues arise when I cannot find an MD to work with her and coordinate on my care. I have had too many endocrinologists that provided one-size-fits-all care, only looking at labs and not listening to me and my unique symptoms - and dismissing symptoms they are not sure about. In NY I still needed an MD to prescribe my thyroid medicine. I have been lucky enough to find some great doctors willing to work with my ND and provide coordinated care. There were other times when I did not have an MD willing to do this. This was very stressful and resulted to gaps in medication, throwing my thyroid off just because I did not have coordinated care. Getting back on track takes several months and sometimes years.

When I moved to Maine 16 years ago I had a couple of PCPs that were not willing to work with my ND but said they were willing to manage my thyroid. (I was still under the care of the NY-based ND on a compounded formula we would adjust by the microgram.) In the beginning I had an amazing NP where I lived that was willing to call my ND and work with her to manage my thyroid. I felt great and was very healthy. I then moved and no longer had this practitioner, and it was very difficult to find someone to support my whole health. I once had a great FNP that worked so well with my remote ND, but once she left her practice unexpectedly, the MD in charge of the practice told me over the phone he would no longer provide me care as my “case was too complex”. I assured him that my ND had managed my thyroid for almost 10 years and that she had incredible credentials and qualifications. He still refused to help out or keep me on. When pressed further, he said he “did not believe in naturopathic medicine” and would not manage my thyroid with her or on his own. After I pleaded for some continuing care, he said he would write me just one more script so I could find a new practitioner.

SHE IS CURIOUS AND KNOWLEDGABLE. There was another time that I was having horrible hives and angioedema. I was also having miscarriages. I went to a fertility specialist, an allergist, a Chronic Urticaria Specialist, my PCP, my GYN and no one could help me. I was put on a month of steroids because they became concerned with anaphylaxis following the increasing occurrence of the swelling of my eyes and lips. I had serious issues when weening off of the steroids, and then all of the other issues returned once off of them – hives, angioedema, another miscarriage. The chronic urticaria specialist told me that 85-90% of his patients did not have a reason for their hives. He suggested I take 7 Zyrtec a day and if that didn't help (it didn't) I should add 2 Zantac; if that didn't help I could go back on steroids... and – don't worry – it is all safe for my pregnancy. Basically, he had no clue but could not admit that. This is when I canceled my next appointment saying I needed someone that was curious and would get to the bottom of all of these strange symptoms - and called my ND back in NYC. She asked many questions, ordered bloodwork (something the fertility specialist told me they do not typically do until a woman has 3-4 miscarriages). She also dug into my genetics. She was the only one that caught and placed importance on my genetic polymorphisms. She instantly said she thought it could be possibly due to 3 different things... and we went through those ideas one by one and came up with my issues – and the needed remedy – and the hives went away with a couple of simple supplements and more careful care of my thyroid - and I went on to have a happy and healthy pregnancy and birth! I am so incredibly grateful for her.

When I became pregnant, my PCP and GYN said I needed to see an endocrinologist in Maine to manage my thyroid. This MD wanted to change my medication, and I protested as I felt great. After giving birth, he ran labs and said I was “fine” and cut me off of all thyroid meds. I called and explained I had been on meds since I was 28 and I would like to remain on them (knowing that postpartum and 40-yr old was not the time to give up support of my thyroid, especially given all of the complications I had had to get there). Unfortunately, he was not familiar with the compounded medicine I was on and was unwilling to work with me after my daughter was born. I

was cut off my meds abruptly. I scrambled to find another doctor and it was not easy. When I almost fell asleep in the middle of the day driving the MD reluctantly did labs and my TSH had spiraled up to over 100 in just over one month! I had so many health issues pop up and desperately needed to find a doctor who would listen to me and would treat me with medication that worked best for me. He refused to put me back on the same compounded meds. I went on Synthroid, but kept looking for another doctor to help. It was impossible to find a doctor that knew both thyroid and autoimmune issues and was willing to work with my ND. I finally did but in that mean time I was thrown so far off that it took a couple of years to get back on track.

Three years ago I ended up with Lyme. My ND recommended checking in with my PCP and getting antibiotics to treat it. The treatment ended up being worse than the Lyme. I had a horrible allergic reaction to the doxy. When I went to the walk-in clinic with a resting heart rate of 130, incredibly ill and not able to eat, pounding headache and sheets of skin peeling off my hands and feet (and at this point I was only on half dose because of how ill it was making me), he told me that doxy was hard on everyone and to just keep up with it. I then immediately called my ND. She said my list of symptoms sounds like Steven-Johnson syndrome and I should stop the antibiotics immediately. She ran labs, and my liver was in bad shape. She immediately provided an alternative herbal treatment to the Lyme, as well as several herbs and supplements and treatment to repair the inflammation and liver. Once again, I had an MD treat me with one-size-fits-all medicine and solutions, and my ND looked at the big picture, genetics and really listened to my symptoms, and I slowly recovered from the S-J symptoms and successfully treated the Lyme with herbs and have had no issues since.

I am currently under my NDs care for HRT and I am so thankful. My PCP did not have much to say on the subject. I am grateful for the thoughtful care and balanced and thorough discussions that I had with my ND before deciding it was as the right thing for me given all of my symptoms at this time. I am hoping all goes well, knowing that my ND is limited in what she can offer me. If I will once again need to find another practitioner to coordinate with for needed medication, this will cause stress that will be counter to my overall well-being and thyroid health.

With my ND now residing in Maine I am able to get seamless care for most all of my needs... but not all. I am hoping my examples help to illustrate what happens when NDs have limits not consistent with MDs. The examples I have shared today are just the most serious and relevant examples of why I value my naturopathic doctor over all other doctors – I could provide a dozen more if needed – but I think they illustrate the more general issues of NDs being restricted in their formulary and actions when so many people rely on them as their primary and most trusted method of care.

Please consider providing NDs in Maine the permission to provide comprehensive care to all of their patients as they need.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD1128 and I hope you will vote “Ought to Pass”

Best regards,
Melissa Hall, Hope, ME