

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and Members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, My name is Ben Hagopian and I'm a local family physician in South Portland. I practice primary care, integrative medicine, and longevity medicine and have been in practice for 15 years. With my background in holistic medicine, I do feel well-positioned to comment on this bill.

Thank you for considering my written testimony against portions of the bill before the committee regarding scope of practice for naturopathic doctors. Naturopathic doctors are important parts of our healthcare system and community. Many patients turn to them when conventional medicine fails them and some patients improve with a naturopathic approach.

However, parts D, E, and F of this bill dangerously increase scope of practice for naturopathic doctors.

Part D would allow naturopathic doctors to prescribe amino acid and peptide therapy, two groups of treatments that are yet to be proven effective or safe. As an integrative and longevity physician, I have yet to see any safety or efficacy studies of these medications. While I am hopeful, they will one day become part of our approved therapies, they are not at this time. Members of the medical community who prescribe these therapies are doing so off-label and without FDA approval, often as a money-making endeavor. I do not think NDs without conventional medical training or training in detailed scientific study analysis should be allowed to prescribe these controversial classes of therapies. What will happen with this part of the bill is that naturopathic doctors will set up shop in Maine to use this increased scope of practice to sell unproven and potentially unsafe therapies.

Part E absolutely needs to come with significant stipulations. Only after medical school, in residency training, did we learn how to insert an IUD or contraceptive implant. There needs to be a certification process for these devices to ensure naturopathic doctors are trained as well as osteopathic and allopathic physicians. If placed improperly, contraceptives may not work or can lead to catastrophic complications.

Part F is far too vague and again brings concern about yet another unproven revenue stream for naturopathic doctors. 'Medical appliances and devices' is an incredibly broad term that may include more unproven therapies, further compromising patient care and financial integrity of naturopathic doctors. There needs to be more oversight and definition of what these devices are and why naturopathic doctors need to prescribe them.

I am not concerned about other portions of this bill but I am encouraging the legislature to fine-tune this bill to protect the health of the public and the patients who would be affected, both in terms of physical and financial health.

Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to discuss any questions with you prior to your work session.

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