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AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1440
MAINE RELAY 711

Paul R. Flynn

78 Bessey Ridge Rd
Albion, ME 04910
Paul.Flynn@legislature.maine.gov
Cell: (207) 314-5525

Testimony on
L.D. 1128, "*An Act to Modernize the Formulary for Naturopathic Doctors*"

Presented by
Representative Paul R. Flynn
District 63

Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services Committee
Thursday, April 3, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and fellow members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services:

I am State Representative Paul R. Flynn, and I represent the citizens of District 63, which consists of Albion, Freedom, Unity Township, and a portion of Winslow. I am here today to speak as a co-sponsor of L.D. 1128, "*An Act to Modernize the Formulary for Naturopathic Doctors*."

The reasons for my support are born from a deep personal experience that I would like to share to place this into its proper perspective. I am not advancing this bill for any lobby. I am advancing this bill for the reasons I will mention and for the obvious fact that we are losing literally all of our healthcare coverage in our most rural areas. We need healthcare support, of any kind, and I am happy to advance the cause of the science and discipline of the naturopathic medical community.

Five years ago, I experienced a personal health crisis. From the summer of 2020 until the spring of 2021, I was experiencing a very progressive disease that was manifesting many symptoms, the most notable being rapid and unexplainable weight loss, fatigue, shortness of memory, and severe anxiety -- all coupled with an inability to digest food. A cadre of tests cleared me of the obvious, i.e. cancer, organ failure, etc., yet left me in a situation of never ending tests, sometimes weeks between them, with no answers. A final resolution from the medical community was a regimen of steroids, and if that did not work, intestinal bypass.

My lower GI was not working. My upper GI was brutally damaged after a lifetime of prescription, and then OTC, acid blockers. There was a diagnosis that my entire digestive system was shutting down. I had gone from an average of 235 pounds to now just below 140 pounds. Not being warm and fuzzy to this course of treatment and prognosis at the age of 58, I sought alternatives.

In 2012, I was diagnosed with Lyme disease. I was very concerned, as much of my life is outdoors, and the PCP's two-week regimen of anti-biotics was not going to be enough. Accordingly, I sought the care of Dr. Elizabeth Yori, Heritage Natural Health, in Belfast.

Over, please

Being the store owner in a town of 680 people and the largest school district in the State of Maine, you get to know a lot of people. When I first found out that Liz had become a doctor, I was not surprised, as I knew her as a very formidable female wrestler from Brooks during her high school years at Mt. View High School, in Thorndike. I figured she had to be a good doctor to be from a farm in Waldo County, and a female wrestler. I needed that level of fight in my corner. In addition to the Lyme, I was dealing with a lifelong anxiety issue. As such, I was open to "alternative" care, since the Lyme disease can exacerbate dormant ailments.

So naturally, I am not in a good place with my prognosis. I called Dr. Yori as all this was going on and brought her right in beside me. When the medical doctors would make a recommendation, she would help by suggesting this or that and always explaining to me in understandable terms what was going on in my body to ease my mind. When it came to the final prognosis of surgery, my doctor, Dr. Yori, knew how I passionately felt about having to live an altered life after a bypass surgery. She never even suggested I not have the surgery. She simply listened to how I felt about it. She then, using all her skills as a naturopathic doctor, urged me to submit to a simple blood test to explore possible food allergies.

We did the test. She called me literally in tears and laughing to tell me that I am now, and actually have been my entire life, allergic to literally 85% of all the foods I had been eating!

I had suffered from heart burn and other GI issues my entire life -- since childhood. The long-term use of antacids had caused the upper GI issues, along with lifelong heart burn brought about as my body was attempting to dispel the toxins that it could not digest. My small and large intestines were used up after a lifetime of attempting to digest food that my body was treating as poison. The malabsorption of food altered the chemistry in the small intestine, and I could not get the nutrients naturally produced to maintain good brain function and be anxiety free.

I immediately began eating only the foods that were specified as foods I would be able to properly digest. As such, I began to heal. Dr. Yori, meeting twice a month, would recommend certain dietary supplements and tracked my progress. We have had a couple of more blood screenings since, and I continue to heal. I have gradually made it back to 150 pounds, and while I have had a few setbacks, I can now say I am fine. I am back to a very healthy weight, and I really have not felt physically better in about 40 years. I am totally medicine free, and I take a modest regimen of OTC dietary aids to assist in function from all the damage.

Now, I am aware that this experience is unique, and not likely to be replicated every day. However, I believe there can be hope for many others. As the science of alternative medicine is better understood, we in the hinterlands and everywhere should welcome any tools given to help us help ourselves. There is a community of amazing, medically trained professionals out there called naturopathic doctors, and thank God they are growing. I know I do every day!

Thank you for your time. I strongly urge us to support L.D. 1128.