

Madame Co-Chairs York and Mathieson and Honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services,

My name is Dr. Elizabeth Yori, ND; I live in Brooks and my Naturopathic practice is in Belfast. I am the most recent past president of the Maine Association of Naturopathic Doctors and the current co-chair of the Legislative committee.

I am speaking to you today in support of LD 1128, An Act to Modernize the Formulary for Naturopathic Doctors.

Naturopathic Doctors have been licensed and practicing with our current formulary Maine since 1996. In that time, we have had an exemplary safety record and no disciplinary actions have been taken against NDs in Maine.

Also, in the nearly 30 years since licensure, there has been no review of our formulary or updating to remain current with standards of medical care and treatment.

Naturopaths have been successfully working with patients with complex medical conditions who are often on polypharmacy in all this time. We are the experts in herb/drug/supplement interaction and management.

Truthfully, I am standing here today, asking for a formulary modernization with the primary goal of being able to help patients come off of medications that they no longer need.

It is well known that many chronic illnesses such as diabetes type 2, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and others are linked to diet and lifestyle. Naturopathic medicine is 'slow medicine'; we work with patients to improve these parameters and help improve or even reverse these conditions. In many cases, this results in patients who need to have changes in their medication. Medications that the current formulary prohibits NDs from helping to manage. The impacts of this are many, but often result in more trips to doctors' offices, putting strain on our healthcare system and the patient, in terms and time and finances.

I have worked with numerous patients over the years who have reversed diabetes, changed their cholesterol profile and lowered their blood pressure, among other things, through diet and lifestyle changes and the use of natural medicines. So many times, my patients become overmedicated because of these changes and need medicines lowered or discontinued. Because many of the medicines used to manage these conditions are not accessible to me in the current formulary, I have to ask my patients to return to their prescribing professional to request that a change or trial taper be considered. This creates an unnecessary burden on patients and the healthcare system. Patients have to take more time and travel, pay more in insurance copays or deductibles or out of pocket costs; doctors have appointments taken up with patients who are in need of care, not because they are ill, but because they are getting better, but are now overmedicated. Insurance companies are billed for more visits and potentially medicines that a patient doesn't currently need. And this is the best-case scenario.

Often patients, frustrated with the process, wait times to have a doctor's visit, dealing with potential side effects from too much medicine, often patients will stop medicines on their own. These effects of this are many and can include acute medical emergencies. A few of my patients have had to go to emergency care due to effects of discontinuing medication without medical supervision because I was not legally allowed to give it and their prescriber was too busy to see them in a timely fashion.

Please understand, I am in no way laying blame on the good, caring, hardworking health care providers in Maine; it is well known that we have a health care crisis in this state. So much so that we are exploring alternative means to meet the need.

No, I am here today, asking for your support of LD1128, An Act to Modernize the Formulary for Naturopathic Doctors, to allow us trained and licensed Naturopathic doctors, to be able to be part of the solution. Help us to better help our patients and be a part of the solution for Maine health care system.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Dr. Elizabeth Yori, ND
Heritage Natural Health