

Chairman Weisz and members of Human Services Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 2274

Good morning, I'm Pharmacist Kevin Oberlander. I was born and raised in North Dakota and graduated from NDSU College of Pharmacy in 1980. I served my pharmacy internship at Bismarck Pharmacy and never left. I have been employed as a Pharmacist by the same corporation in Bismarck and forty-one years later own and operate this same pharmacy now known as Dakota Pharmacy.

We have a traditional retail pharmacy, accredited compounding labs known as Dakota PrecisionRx Labs and Dakota Natural Health Center. My pharmacy class was really the beginning of clinical pharmacy education as me and my classmates were some of the first pharmacy students that participated in clinical work as most of us spent a semester in rotations in hospital settings. It made me realize how rewarding my profession could be working as part of a medical team to achieve the best outcomes for patients. I also realized that I didn't want to work in a hospital setting as my background was a small North Dakota community and a dream of owning and operating my own independent community pharmacy.

Two things saved my pharmacy career. First, we discovered the world of compounding pharmacy which is guided by the Triad of Care. Prescriber, patient and compounding pharmacist working together for the individual patient. Secondly was the incredible fortunate opportunity to work side-by-side with Naturopathic Doctors and Registered Nurses. Over the years we have employed four Registered Nurses and three Naturopathic Doctors. We currently work daily with

Naturopaths Dr. Elizabeth Allmendinger and Dr. Stephanie Nishek as well as Cindy Fisher, RN.

In 2011 the State of North Dakota established the North Dakota Board of Integrative Health Care. One of the duties of this Board was to License Naturopathic Doctors. I was appointed to the first ND Board of Integrative Health Care by then Governor Dalrymple as the Pharmacist on the Board and served two terms and a total of five years.

As you can only imagine in these 40 plus years these eyes have looked at, deciphered, filled and consulted with prescribers and patients on thousands of prescriptions. Almost daily as Pharmacists we see errors, drug interactions and in some rare occasions prescriptions that could be dangerous to a patient. We see patients using medication incorrectly or taking poly-pharmacy as they get medications from multiple places including in the mail. Our job is to work as part of the medical community to assure the health and wellness of these patients.

I have seen the prescriber landscape change dramatically with the inclusion of Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants for example attaining prescriptive privileges. At the onset of the inclusion of these privileges I had some reservations. But it didn't take long to realize that these caregivers were highly talented, well-educated and not afraid to reach out for help if needed. I consulted with many new prescribers, especially nurses that had advanced their careers to become Nurse Practitioners. Many of them were colleagues from years past and have become close friends that I refer patients to and consult with on a daily basis.

As a Pharmacist I have absolutely no reservation in Naturopathic Doctor's abilities to add prescriptive privileges to their practice. They are competently educated and as I have witnessed firsthand highly skilled. Fourteen states currently allow Naturopathic Doctors to

prescribe in some capacity including Montana. I have Pharmacist friends in the country that already work closely with Naturopathic Doctors that prescribe. I have 16 plus years working every day with Naturopathic Doctors not only in our pharmacy but consulting with other licensed individuals in North Dakota. Often these consults are about appropriate treatment which may include supplementation or prescription medications and often both. In many cases the patient needs to make another appointment with a practitioner to seek treatment or seek changes to current treatment. Obviously, this can be a barrier to therapy for that individual patient or limits the choices the patient is making in their health care treatment. What doesn't change is the Pharmacist being an integral part of the prescription process.

What is most bothersome to me is that if we receive a prescription from a Naturopathic Doctor who is licensed to prescribe in the state they practice and the patient resides in North Dakota we can fill that prescription. We do see patients travel to see Naturopathic Doctors and bring these prescriptions to our pharmacy. Snowbirds spending time in Arizona is a great example. I have a hard time with the idea that I can fill that prescription from a Naturopathic Doctor outside of North Dakota but can not do so for these competent individuals that see patients in the same building as Dakota Pharmacy or someone with a Naturopathic Doctor license, licensed by the state of North Dakota that might be 5 blocks away.

Please consider a do pass on Senate Bill 2274