

SB 2274 Naturopathic Scope Bill
Senate Human Services Committee
Jeff Schmidt
February 1, 2021

Good Morning Madam Chair and Members of the Senate Human Service Committee. My name is Jeffrey (Jeff) M Schmidt. I am here as a skeptic, who has become a believer in Naturopathic Medicine. My wife has gone to Naturopathic doctors and Nurse Practitioners for a long time and my sister was after me forever to go to Dr Link to investigate my thyroid concerns. I would tease my sister mercilessly about going to quacks and taking natural medications. I totally believed in staying with standard medical doctors within my insurance payment plan. But I changed my mind after Dr Link saved my life!

My experience with the main stream medical establishment for the treatment and care for my thyroid condition is lengthy and spans for decades and quite frankly is still unbelievable for anyone believing in traditional medicine. I would like to point out that I was always a skeptic of Naturopathic Medicine until my personal experience proved otherwise. I had reached a point in my care that I felt very strongly that I had to try something else, so I decided to give Naturopathic Medicine 1 year to improve my health and change my skepticism, as I had nothing to lose trying, or just give up trying to improve my health. Wow what a difference Naturopathic Medicine has made in my life and what a path it was to get here.

I am 60 years old so I have had quite a bit of time dealing with medical doctors. Both of my parents had thyroid issues and had the usual, the only treatment for thyroid – cut it out. So many times, when I went in for checkups, doctors would take one look at my enlarged eyes and goiter in my neck and say you obviously have thyroid issues. Then they would run the one standard test, TSH, Thyroid Stimulating Hormone, and low and behold it was within the wide normal range, so nothing could be done! One doctor wanted to immediately kill it with radioactive iodine, of course! I said to that doctor, I am allergic to iodine, when I was swabbed with betadine it resulted in a major burn with blisters over the entire area of the betadine swab, so I refused the treatment of killing off the thyroid with iodine. Having dealt with my own and family thyroid issues, I have done a lot of reading and studying it.

About 3 years later the goiter was even bigger which had me again pursuing medical consult and now a different M.D. Finally, a doctor here in Bismarck (who had an autoimmune disease himself) ran all 3 thyroid tests (TSH, T4, T3). The TSH again came back in the normal range but the T3 and T4 were way outside of normal ranges prompting the Doctor to ask how I am feeling. I answered, no different than I have in years, but he said my blood tests are so far out of acceptable range that he was surprised I wasn't in a coma and we need to start treating with Synthroid immediately and return for blood tests in 6 weeks. So, I was finally put on the standard Synthroid medication which did help me feel better and reduce my goiter.

At this time my blood tests were mostly within normal ranges and I was feeling well overall for quite a few years. Due to circumstances out of my control my insurance coverage changed to Blue Cross of South Dakota and their benefits regarding my prescription medications changed from Blue Cross of North Dakota. They would no longer allow coverage for brand name thyroid medications and I had to use only generic thyroid medications if I wanted the insurance to cover the costs. Upon starting the generic medication, I would itch all over, especially my

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hands. After I talked to the pharmacists, we determined that I was reacting to the generic brand. The pharmacists thought it could be the fillers which make up the generic pill, causing the itching. The insurance company did not care, so I had to either use the generic regardless of complications or purchase thyroid medications totally at my expense.

I decided, that since I was going to pay for 100% of the cost of thyroid medications, I wanted to try a natural thyroid medication Armour due to the reaction of the generic. My doctor was open to trying the medication Armour. I immediately felt much better, but there was constant testing and readjusting. Unfortunately, my doctor moved to administration, so I was forced to see a new doctor. The new doctor tried to help with adjustments but he didn't really want to be bothered trying to figure out what dosage I was needing and even admitted he does not know a lot about thyroids.

I began to start feeling poorly again and was beginning to have more skin eruptions, which I thought was sensitivity to more and more foods. I really, truly wanted to stay within mainstream medical treatments. I thought I would try another doctor because I just wanted to have the same doctor for my regular physical checkups and also take care of my thyroid as that was really my only other medical concern. But this doctor asked me why I was even there and said he is not about to be messing around adjusting thyroid medication. I was even told by that M.D. that they don't pay the doctor to get involved with 'thinking' to figure out what isn't easy thyroid adjustments. And that doctor even said my theory of food causing issues is the dumbest thing he had ever heard a patient say. This left me feeling very lost as how to proceed. I had reached the point now that I just needed someone else to evaluate my condition that can think outside the box or just willing to put some thought into what might be happening. Who could help me? My sister had been recommending for years that I should see Glen Hyland, M.D. and Lezlie Link, N.D., as they helped her, her daughter, and her granddaughter with their thyroid issues. That last visit with a regular medical doctor, was the last straw for me and the beginning of me being treated by a naturopathic doctor.

Dr Link ordered an ultrasound for a base line and there were still lumps and bumps in my thyroid. We did a second follow up ultrasound 6 months later and that looked like there were further changes. Now, I had an ultrasound years before that another doctor had ordered, but just for a base line and we'll just watch it. But what they were watching, I don't know as they never ordered another one. Dr Link followed up again and ordered a biopsy of my thyroid to check out the strange nodules. The radiologist broke several biopsy needles on my very hard nodule, so that was strange. The lab could not determine if there was any cancer. Dr Link referred me on to an ENT (Ear, Nose, Throat) doctor and he recommended a total thyroidectomy. My pathology report showed cancer in my thyroid, the ENT doctor said, luckily it was all still encapsulated within the thyroid. Now one year post surgery I am healthy and feeling better than I have in decades. I have continued working with Dr Link on adjusting my thyroid medication under the direction of Dr Hyland's oversight for the last 15 months.

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My decision to be seen by a Naturopathic Doctor was my best decision, I only wish I would have made it decades ago. I believe, had I continued to tolerate the care of medical providers in regards to my thyroid, no one really knows where my health situation would be now. I feel so much better than I use to. It is amazing what a person will put up with when a person does not know what could or should be, and how much better, healthier they can feel. I still believe traditional medicine is awesome if you have a gunshot wound or something very obvious, but if you have a health situation that requires a puzzle master to sort through the clues, a Naturopathic Doctor is the way to go, because if there is something out of their scope, they are not afraid to refer you to the specialist needed. I am very pleased with my experience with naturopathic medicine and have all intentions of keeping them a part of my care. It would be nice if insurance companies would start accepting naturopathic medicine into the main stream medicine and start accepting claims from them as normal medical services without doubling deductibles. I have no way of quantifying how many \$ dollars my case will save the medical insurance and myself over the long term but strongly feel it will be substantial. So, I give credit to Dr Link, my Naturopathic doctor, for saving my life. Without her ordering the necessary imaging and tests, my cancer could have advanced without any one caring to follow up and catching it so early.

I do recommend a DO PASS on SB 2274 Naturopathic Bill.

Respectfully,

Jeffrey M Schmidt