

SB 2274-Naturopathic Bill
Senate Human Services Committee
Molly Dwyer
February 1, 2021

Dear Chairwoman Lee and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

My name is Molly Dwyer and I will be graduating Naturopathic medical school in three months. My husband and I are originally from Bismarck, ND. We currently live in Villa Park, IL, as I finish school at National University of Health Sciences and my husband is employed as a middle school math teacher. I am writing to ask for your support, and urge you to pass Senate Bill 2274-Naturopathic Bill.

I always knew I wanted to be a doctor and first learned about Naturopathic Medicine while in college, through a Naturopathic Doctor in Moorhead, MN. Shortly after, I shadowed a Naturopathic Doctor in Bismarck and learned about the high demand of Naturopathic Medicine within our state. She had patients traveling across North Dakota just to receive healthcare from a Naturopathic Doctor. After observing the need for Naturopathic Doctors within my home state, I wanted to practice medicine in this area, so I started Naturopathic medical school with the intention of returning back home to North Dakota to provide primary care healthcare to rural and underserved areas. I am now 83 days away from graduating Naturopathic medical school and I still feel the passion and belief that every North Dakotan deserves access to and the opportunity to choose Naturopathic Medicine for their healthcare needs if they choose.

My Naturopathic medical education includes four years of undergraduate schooling followed by four years of professional level training at a federally accredited Naturopathic medical school. We are trained as primary care providers who diagnose, treat, and manage patients with acute and chronic conditions. The first two years of my education focused on standard medical curriculum. To confirm competency of the basic sciences, Naturopathic students are required to take the Naturopathic Physicians Licensing Examination (NPLEX) Part 1. This is a national board examination that is integrated and case-based. Topics include anatomy, physiology, genetics, microbiology, immunology, and pathology. For the last two years of my Naturopathic education, I have been completing an in-residence training program as a Naturopathic Intern in an integrative health clinic under the supervision of licensed healthcare professionals. As an intern, I practice Naturopathic Medicine in a primary care setting while collaborating with and co-managing patients with other providers like MDs, NPs, and Chiropractic Physicians. After graduation, I am required to take an additional board exam, NPLEX Part 2, which ensures proficiency in the following areas: physical, clinical, and lab diagnosis, diagnostic imaging, application of research studies, botanical medicine, physical medicine, clinical nutrition, disease prevention, emergency medicine, medical procedures, public health, and pharmacology.

As I near graduation in April and contemplate where I want to practice professionally, I would like North Dakota to be at the top of my list. However, when compared to other licensed states across the country, the limited scope of practice for Naturopathic Doctors makes the state less desirable and inviting to new graduates. North Dakota's limitations on Naturopathic Doctors' scope of practice is ultimately a disadvantage to consumers as it requires them to see additional or multiple providers, but ultimately receive the same outcome.

There are shortages of primary care providers across America, with rural areas being particularly underserved. If Naturopathic Doctors are given the ability to practice using their full scope of training, they can fill this void. I have friends and family who live in rural communities and I am passionate about serving these areas. I believe citizens in smaller communities should have the option of full-service Naturopathic Medicine. The small number of Naturopathic Doctors currently in North Dakota cannot keep up with the growing demand. Neighboring states like Montana have larger scopes and allow Naturopathic Doctors to practice in a manner that's representative of our robust medical education. Not only does this help their citizens, it attracts more young professionals to start businesses and contribute to their economies.

Because of this, I am strongly considering practicing as a Naturopathic Doctor across the North Dakota border in Sydney, MT. In Montana, I would have the ability to serve North Dakota citizens and operate as a Naturopathic Doctor with a full scope of practice. However, it would still be a major inconvenience for them, and I would not be contributing to North Dakota as much as I would like. Montana has significantly more Naturopathic Doctors throughout the state, and the growing popularity in Naturopathic medicine across the country has contributed not only to the health of the citizens, but also contributes to their state's economy.

North Dakota will always hold a special place in my heart; it is home to many of my family and friends who live in very caring and supportive communities that make the state a great place to settle down and start a family. As a young professional who is eager to enter her career field, it is imperative that I live and work in a place with a scope of practice that reflects my extensive education and allows me to succeed as a Naturopathic Doctor. With the passing of this bill, North Dakota would quickly become an appealing place to practice Naturopathic Medicine. I am enthusiastically asking you to support and pass SB 2274-Naturopathic Bill. I would really like to start my career in North Dakota.

Thank you for your time,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Molly Dwyer".

Molly Dwyer