

SB 2221 Naturopathic Scope Bill
Lezlie Link, ND
House Human Services Committee
March 22nd, 2023

Good Morning Chairman Weisz, Vice Chairman Ruby, and Members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Lezlie Link. I am a Naturopathic Doctor or ND, and a business owner from Bismarck. I am in support of the naturopathic scope expansion bill. I have been co-prescribing pharmaceutical drugs since moving back to North Dakota in 2012. After finishing my graduate education in 2009, I started my naturopathic family residency program at Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine in Tempe, Arizona. In my nationally accredited residency program, I oversaw the patient management of pharmaceuticals, targeted dietary interventions, lifestyle counseling, botanical medicines, minor surgery, and other interventions alongside my attending physicians. During my post-graduate residency, I supervised the diagnostic skills, laboratory evaluation, and pharmaceutical prescribing of 3rd and 4th-year students. The residency allowed me to rotate within the John C. Lincoln Hospital and the Maricopa County Hospital System. Within the Maricopa County system, I was responsible for the diagnosis and standards of care of many primary care conditions, such as type II diabetes, high blood pressure, and acute primary care. As part of my licensure and previous employment, I prescribed pharmaceutical medications for approximately three years before moving back home to North Dakota.

In 2011, the naturopathic licensure bill passed in North Dakota with overwhelming Senate and House support. I decided that my life in Arizona, as great as it was, that chapter was coming to a close. I was being called home, and I knew my skill set could benefit my state. Honestly, I was hesitant to come back. However, my family was and is all here in ND, and I knew that there would be limitations to my scope of work in the state and, therefore, my ability to do my job well and continue to offer my patients what they needed. I knew I was making a personal and professional sacrifice. I was fortunate to co-found Core Health Strategies in Bismarck with an open-minded dual boarded medical internist and radiation oncologist, Glen Hyland, MD. Over the past 11 years, I have been allowed the opportunity to continue to prescribe and monitor medications under my practice partner's license. He's firsthand seen my diagnostic and clinical decision-making, lab, and imaging interpretation, prescribing recommendations, and specialty referrals. As great as our relationship is, prescribing under Dr. Hyland's license puts liability on him when I should be carrying the liability. Naturopathic doctors carry malpractice insurance, and prescription writing is covered under our malpractice plans. Traditionally, naturopathic doctors have low malpractice premiums due to fewer disciplinary actions and thoughtful use of prescription writing.

Over the past year, my colleagues and I worked with the North Dakota Board of Medicine's legislative team on a collaborative effort to bring forth a bill that satisfies what naturopathic doctors are looking for in terms of scope expansion and transfers the regulation of our profession to the ND Board of Medicine. This bill provides pathways for our current Naturopathic Doctors in the state to move towards prescribing as was in their initial training.

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This bill allows previous North Dakota residents who are Naturopathic Doctors in other state and current naturopathic doctoral students to consider coming back to North Dakota.

As a naturopathic doctor in North Dakota, I became a business owner and was able to have a financially supportive career and serve my fellow North Dakotans. However, to respond to the amount of appointment requests our business is getting, I wanted to add another naturopathic doctor. This took a lot of work to do. Non-native North Dakotan Naturopathic Doctors aren't necessarily jumping for the chance to work in the land of chosen frozen. I waited for a local college graduate to go through her four years of graduate education and then waited for her to decide to come back to ND because most Naturopathic Doctors don't want to sacrifice part of their scope to return home. This bill would allow the profession to align more with other states' naturopathic licensure laws and create more job opportunities.

I recommend a do pass on Senate Bill 2221.

Thank you for your time,

Lezlie Link, ND

If you have follow-up questions, please email dr.lezlielink@gmail.com.