

TESTIMONY ON SB 2221
SENATOR MIKE DWYER, DISTRICT 47

I. INTRODUCTION.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Human Services Committee. My name is Mike Dwyer, State Senator from District 47. If this bill is approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor it will provide increased options and more provider care for our citizens.

II. HISTORY

For those of you who recall last session, we debated a bill to allow North Dakota's Naturopathic Doctors increased prescription privileges in their practice of providing care to their patients. While that bill passed the Senate, it ultimately failed in the House. After the 2021 session, I communicated with the regional manager of Sanford, and Representative Karen Rohr communicated with the ND Medical Assn, asking them to work with the Naturopathic doctor community over the interim and see if they could come up with a compromise solution. In true North Dakota fashion, the ND Board of Medicine and the Naturopathic doctors did exactly that, and the compromise is Senate bill 2221 that you have for consideration before you.

III. SHORTAGE OF MEDICAL PROVIDERS

There is a known shortage of medical providers. There is also an ongoing issue of affordable care, as well as safety for medical patients. This bill addresses all of those issues. As a background, Naturopathic medicine is a growing sector of medical care in the United States. Naturopath medicine emphasizes a holistic approach to health. There is a shortage of medical providers in all of our communities, and the purpose of SB 2221 is to enable a more robust practice for Naturopath providers, and thereby provide an opportunity for these providers in North Dakota.

IV. COMPARISON TO MONTANA

The State of Montana has embraced Naturopathic medical care, and as a result, there are nearly 100 practicing Naturopath doctors working in Montana, with fully staffed clinics. Their safety record is exemplary, and many of the Naturopath doctors serve rural areas in Montana where there is a shortage of providers. In some cases, Naturopath doctors and Allopathic doctors have their clinics together. Montana's approach to this area of medical practice provides an opportunity for greater levels of medical care for their citizens. This bill will allow this growing sector of medical care to flourish in North Dakota, and will provide greater access to care, especially in our rural areas.

V. SB 2221

The compromise offered in SB 2221 is to have Naturopath doctors licensed and overseen by the ND Board of Medicine, which provides the same oversight for all doctors and physicians assistants. The bill would add one Naturopath doctor to the Board of Medicine, and would enable prescription privileges under the initial supervision of an Allopathic doctor. There is a provision for taking the pharmacology exam to enable additional prescription privileges.

Mr. Chairman, that is a brief summary of the bill. This compromise will provide additional choices for patients in the selection of health care providers, and will help address the shortage of medical providers. By providing more options and choices, care also becomes more affordable.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the .
Committee, thank you.