

Chairman Lee 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 Mott, ND, graduated from NDSU College of Pharmacy in 1980. Walked into Bismarck Pharmacy in April of that year to serve as a pharmacy intern. I never left and have been employed as a Pharmacist by this one corporation in Bismarck. Forty-one years later my wife and I own and operate this same pharmacy now known as Dakota Pharmacy.

My dream was to build what is known in our circles as a hybrid pharmacy which we have done. We have a traditional retail pharmacy, two compounding labs known as Dakota PrecisionRx Labs and Dakota Natural Health Center where we employ a Registered Nurse and two Doctors of Naturopathic medicine.

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. 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 have become close friends and colleagues that I refer patients to and consult with on a daily basis.

Fast forward to February 2004 when Dr Faye Johnson, ND and a recent graduate of Bastyr University walked into our pharmacy, owned by Pharmacist Tony Welder at that time. She was interested in our

thoughts on the possibility of success if she started a clinic in Bismarck. With our futuristic goals of expanding our hybrid pharmacy setting we jumped at the chance to bring Dr Johnson on board and she joined our staff. Dr Beth Allmendinger, ND and also a graduate of Bastyr followed in October of 2011. And finally, Dr Stephanie Nishek, ND joined us in November of 2016 bring our total to three Naturopathic Doctors. Dr Faye Johnson has since moved into her own independent practice but Dr. Beth Allmendinger and Dr. Stephanie Nishek continue to work side-by-side with our pharmacy staff.

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 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 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 the appropriate treatment which may include supplementation or prescription medications. If a prescription medication is warranted the patient must have the Naturopathic Doctor consult with their prescriber or make another appointment with that prescriber to seek 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 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. So, as an example, and it does occur, a snowbird will see a Naturopathic Doctor in Arizona and upon returning to North Dakota will present the prescription to our pharmacy to be filled. I do know that patients will travel to a state where a Naturopathic Doctor can prescribe so they can get the care that they are seeking. I have a hard time with the idea that I can fill that prescription from a Naturopathic Doctor outside of our state but can not do so for these competent individuals that see patients in the same building as Dakota Pharmacy or Dakota PrecisionRx Labs or someone that practices Naturopathic Medicine maybe 5 blocks from us.

Please consider a do pass on Senate Bill 2274