



November 10, 2011

Representative Julie Harhart
313 Main Capitol Building PO Box 202183
Harrisburg, PA 17

Re: HB 1717

Dear Chairwoman Harhart and members of the House Professional Licensure Committee,

I am writing to ask your support of HB 1717, a bill that would provide licensure for naturopathic physicians in Pennsylvania. HB 1717 introduced by Representative Mark Mustio (R-Moan Twp) on June 23, 2011 and referred to the House Professional Licensure Committee. Passage of this bill would allow naturopathic physicians to practice more fully to the scope of their education and training. HB 1717 would facilitate integrating naturopathic physicians into the Board of Medicine.

According to the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, nearly 1 in 4 Americans use some type of alternative medicine therapy in support of their health and wellness. As these numbers continue to rise, the need for qualified health care providers with expert knowledge in both clinical diagnostic ability and safe administration of natural-based therapies is critical. Naturopathic Doctors (ND's) are the only physician-level trained primary health care providers with the scope of didactic and clinical education to fill this health care void. Currently sixteen other states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico recognize naturopathic physicians in a scope of practice similar to that of HB 1717

Naturopathic physicians attend a four-year post baccalaureate, graduate

level program at one of five accredited naturopathic medical schools in the US. The professional regulating authority, the Council on Naturopathic Medical Education (**CNME**) is recognized by the US department of Education and held to the same standards by the US Department of Education for accreditation as allopathic schools of medicine or osteopathy.

Naturopathic physicians are the only doctors trained with a primary focus on the prevention of chronic disease. With a strong foundation in **wellness** based therapies such as clinical nutrition and lifestyle counseling, naturopathic physicians stand well positioned to address the underlying causes of chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer before patients exhibit significant symptoms and require more invasive treatments,

Licensing naturopathic physicians is a cost-effective way to reduce the burden of chronic disease in Pennsylvania. According to a **2011** report from the Center for Disease Control almost 11% of the US Population suffers from type II diabetes with an average fiscal impact of \$7,000.00 annually per patient. Naturopathic doctors' focus on therapeutic life changes is particularly timely given today's epidemic of this chronic diseases brought on by poor diet, sedentary lifestyles and high stress. Ample evidence exists to substantiate the role of naturopathic therapies in preventing or delaying the onset of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, cancer and arthritis. Permitting naturopathic physicians to practice could greatly reduce the cost of these chronic diseases in the Commonwealth. Strong examples of cost savings appear in a study completed by the Green Mountain **Wellness** Solutions in 2006 which demonstrated that the Vermont Automobile Dealers Association realized a 1.5 million dollar cost savings in one year when their employees were examined and advised by a naturopathic physician. In light of the physician shortage that exists in this state. The Pennsylvania Medical Society, in their latest State of Medicine report, references the statewide physician shortage, especially in family medicine, and implores policy makers to "ensure an adequate number of primary care practitioners. Failure to address these issues will result in increased waiting times for appointments, lack of preventative care, and adverse health outcomes!" **HB 1717** will help address the shortage we face

of qualified health practitioners.

HB 1717 will ~~not~~ limit any other healthcare provider or practitioner from using natural therapies as they have been or are currently permitted under their primary licenses. HB 1717 will not limit the sales of supplements, botanicals, or homeopathic remedies at retail stores, offices, and pharmacies or **by** the general public. This **legislation** will simply preclude anyone who does not meet the educational criteria and standardization from using the title Naturopath, Naturopathic Doctor, Naturopathic Physician, ND, NMD or other derivations.

Please place HB 1717 on your high priority list so that Pennsylvania will continue to be progressive in healthcare ~~delivery~~ while meeting the public demand for integrative medicine.

Gene McGill
Legislative Director
American Association of Naturopathic Physicians