

Testimony in Support SB 856

**Senate Healthcare, Human Services &
Rural Health Policy Committee
March 7, 2011**

My name is Regina Dehen. I'm a naturopathic physician and the Chief Medical Officer at the National University of Natural Medicine and its clinics in Portland. I'm here today to testify in support of Senate Bill 856, and strongly urge you to adopt the amendments being considered for many reasons, including the following:

1. First, there is a greater demand than ever for an expanded healthcare workforce, and for every member of that workforce to be working at the highest level of their scope. This bill would allow naturopaths to do that.
2. The current omission of naturopaths in the definitions of "physician" in some statutes but not in others creates barriers to care for patients in unexpected ways. An example is the inability to refer patients for convalescent care when they are being discharged from the hospital. We have patients assigned to us as the empaneled Primary Care providers, so we know when they're hospitalized, and we are obligated to follow up with them when they are discharged, but if they need to be transferred to convalescent care, or if they need home health nursing care, we cannot order that; that's a barrier to continuity of care and a jarring experience for vulnerable patients.
3. Another example is the inability to write POLST or sign an Advanced Directive at end of life care. This means that a person with a terminal illness like cancer whose PCP is a naturopath who is in hospice who does not want to be resuscitated may have that happen because Emergency Services personnel have to run the code since they don't have a physician's order not to do so.
4. With respect to care for minors, it's unclear if we are allowed to maintain confidentiality with respect to reproductive rights or treatment for substance abuse. This has far-reaching consequences.
5. We cannot do in-office microscopy. Physician assistants and podiatrists can diagnose a urinary tract infection or a yeast infection or bacterial vaginosis by using a microscope, but we can only do it through a CLIA-waived test kit which adds cost and time.
6. I want to point out that this is not a request for expansion of the scope of practice of naturopaths – we can still prescribe most vaccines and diagnose yeast infections or urinary tract infections – but having to do tasks by work around is an impediment to best practices.
7. In summary, failure to support this bill has negative impacts on patient care, reducing the effective workforce, reducing quality of care and increasing costs unnecessarily.

Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians

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Again, for all the patients who choose to see a naturopathic physician for their primary care, I urge you to please support Senate Bill 856 and the amendments as offered today by the Oregon Association of Naturopathic Physicians. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.