

MINUTES
SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, March 12, 2019

TIME: 2:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW54

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Martin, Vice Chairman Souza, Senators Heider, Lee, Bayer, Jordan, and Nelson

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Senators Harris and Burtenshaw

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

CONVENED: **Chairman Martin** called the meeting of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee (Committee) to order at 2:08 p.m.

H 244 **Representative Gestrin** presented **H 244**, regarding licensure of naturopathic medical doctors. This outcome is 20 years in development. Licensure requirements consist of four years of undergraduate studies, four years of training in an accredited naturopathic school, and successful passage of the national board examination. The creation of the Board of Naturopathic Medical Doctors goes into effect this year, under the Board of Medicine. Most of the bill does not go into effect until July 1, 2020. That incremental effective date allows the newly-formed board time to promulgate rules, and allows naturopathic practitioners currently not under this same umbrella to continue to practice while pursuing a path forward. This is the third iteration of the bill this session and represents a point of collaboration where differing views have come together.

TESTIMONY: **Kris Ellis**, on behalf of the Idaho Chapter of the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians, testified in support of **H 244**. She thanked the Board of Medicine for their assistance in drafting this legislation. The crux of this legislation is to grant prescriptive, imaging, and laboratory authority to this group of practitioners, following the same standards and scope of practice found in other states with licensure for naturopathic physicians. The bill provides for increased healthcare access and cost savings to Idahoans and offers consumers another option. The Idaho Medical Association position is neutral, the Retail Pharmacy Association supports the bill, the Idaho Freedom Foundation gave it a zero rating, and Health Freedom Idaho has not opposed the bill.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Bayer** inquired what percent of the total number of practicing naturopaths are eligible for licensure. **Ms. Ellis** explained that in 1955, the Idaho Supreme Court ruled that anyone in Idaho can call themselves a naturopathic doctor. Idaho has a myriad of practitioners who call themselves naturopathic doctors, performing a myriad of activities. The total number of naturopathic practitioners in Idaho is not known. There are approximately 25 that are qualified to be licensed under this criteria for primary care, at this time. In follow up, **Senator Bayer** asked how many accredited schools offer this training. **Ms. Ellis** reported that there are eight schools in North America. Further, **Senator Bayer** asked about those who have received alternative training overseas, such as those who practice acupuncture and ayurvedic medicine. **Ms. Ellis** explained that much discussion ensued about those who choose not to be included in this group under the Board of Medicine. Members in the House of Representatives are working with those other groups;

some elements of this bill are delayed in implementation to allow them time to develop a path forward.

Chairman Martin clarified that there are three groups: this legislation addresses one group, the second group is working with House membership to move forward on different licensure, and the third group chooses not to pursue licensure.

Senator Lee asked for confirmation that this legislation will afford her constituents the opportunity to apply health benefits for qualifying naturopathic treatment. **Ms. Ellis** confirmed that she believes that it does.

Chairman Martin requested more detail regarding coverage under insurance, and state and federal programs. **Ms. Ellis** responded that this legislation does not mandate coverage and it is a business decision by insurers to decide what to cover in their policies. She went on to state that there are some insurers in Idaho that do cover care provided by naturopathic medical doctors.

Senator Lee commented that in the past, many naturopathic doctors expressed interest in not accepting insurance and she wondered if those practitioners continue to be exempt under this legislation. **Ms. Ellis** outlined the sections of the bill confirming that exemption.

TESTIMONY: **Dr. Joan Haynes**, a naturopathic physician practicing in Boise for over 20 years, testified in support of the bill. **Dr. Haynes** walked the Committee through a description of her practice: there are four naturopathic physicians that manage common conditions typically seen in any family practice, including colds and influenza, but also complex issues like autoimmune disease and cancer. In Idaho, she has not been able to practice her full scope of training. She was approached by Dr. Zuckerman, Director of the Mountain State Tumor Institute (MSTI), to work with MITI's Integrative Medicine Center, but was unable to pursue that opportunity without licensure. Other states employ naturopathic physicians in highly reputable organizations like the Kaiser Permanente Hospitals, Cedar Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles, Columbia University, and the National Institute for Health. She expressed the need for this legislation to allow her profession to accommodate Idaho's growing population.

DISCUSSION: **Vice Chairman Souza** applauded the collaboration between stakeholders. **Chairman Martin** echoed her sentiments and welcomed further testimony.

TESTIMONY: **Dr. Sara Rogers**, a naturopathic doctor and certified acupuncturist, testified in support of this bill. **Dr. Rogers** informed the Committee that she is the owner of Idaho Naturopathic Medicine, providing care through two offices, one in Boise and one in Ontario, Oregon. She provides physical exams, blood work, and treatment plans that rely heavily on lifestyle changes. She is able to provide a higher level of care in her Ontario office because under Oregon law, she has prescriptive authority. Approximately one half of her patients in that Oregon office come from the surrounding Idaho communities. Licensure in Idaho would allow Idahoans not living close to a licensed state to receive the same level of care.

DISCUSSION: **Representative Gestrin** closed by stating it is a pleasure to have reached this agreement and recommended the Committee send it to the floor with a do pass recommendation.

Chairman Martin acknowledged Senators Heider and Lodge, both former Health and Welfare Chairmen, for their efforts over the years regarding this issue.

MOTION: **Senator Heider** moved to send **H 244** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Lee** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Martin** adjourned the meeting at 2:30 p.m.

Senator Martin
Chair

Margaret Major
Secretary