

Florida Medical Association FACT SHEET



NATUROPATHS

HB by

SB by

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FMA Position

The FMA and many other health care associations are strongly opposed to naturopaths once again being licensed by the state of Florida as health care providers. This bill allows unqualified persons to practice several health care professions, including medicine. Under the bill, a person who attends a school of naturopathy would be allowed to diagnose, treat, operate and prescribe for disease, pain, injury or other physical or mental condition. This is the definition of the practice of medicine.

Background

The bill revives the Board of Naturopathic Medicine and recreates the profession of naturopathy in Florida. In the 1920s, the state of Florida began licensing naturopaths, but ended the process in 1959. In 1985, all individuals who were licensed prior to 1959 were granted active licenses under a grandfather clause. Currently, only a few individuals are practicing naturopathy with an active license.

The House Committee on Health Care prepared an Interim Project Report in January 2004, titled “Sunrise Report on Proposed Licensure of Naturopathic Physicians.” **The House report, citing concerns expressed by the Department of Health, states “...the proposed licensure of naturopathic physicians would likely increase the risk of harm to the public...”** The report expresses particular concern that the bill goes beyond allowing a naturopath to practice naturopathy – it would allow a naturopath to prescribe controlled substances.

The bill requires applicants for a naturopathic license to attend a naturopathic school. According to the House report, some of the colleges providing four-year programs are not yet fully accredited. The people who graduate from these schools are not adequately trained to become treating physicians, yet would be given the title “Naturopathic Physician” or “Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine” under this bill. The bill will allow “doctors” who are not adequately trained to, among other things, perform surgery, prescribe controlled substances and perform psychotherapy.

Since 1996, 20 different states have rejected licensing initiatives, including 12 states that have rejected initiatives more than once. There has been no consumer driven demand for licensing naturopaths in Florida. Florida should not become one of the few states to pass this type of legislation.

Discussion

The prerequisites for becoming a naturopath do not adequately prepare a person to perform the acts that the scope of practice would allow.

A medical doctor receives the following training:

1. A Bachelor's degree in science;
2. Two years of medical school consisting primarily of classroom study;
3. Two years of medical school consisting of clinical work; and
4. A three-year labor-intensive residency program consisting of hands-on clinical practice.

In addition, many physicians complete a fellowship lasting two to four years and consisting of more clinical, hands-on practice.

A physician receives a minimum of SIX years of classroom study and FIVE years of clinical practice before he/she becomes licensed as a physician in Florida.

A naturopath would be allowed to perform the same acts as a medical doctor, but is not required to receive a bachelor's degree.

It is also important to note that the Medical Quality Trust Fund is not adequately funded. It would not be fiscally prudent for the Trust Fund to take on an inadequately funded profession when the fund is already being depleted.

Conclusion

The Florida Medical Association, as well as many other health care associations, believes that it is imperative for the safety and welfare of patients and the general public that naturopaths not be licensed by the state of Florida as health care practitioners. They simply do not have the education or training needed to safely treat patients. It is also important to note that the Florida Association of Naturopathic Medicine opposes this legislation.