



Dear Representative Shanley and the Special Legislative Committee,

After the last three meetings of the Special Legislative Committee I am firmly in support of adding Naturopathic Physicians to be providers for HMOs.

In the first committee meeting we discussed how the current rules of the RI Insurance companies precludes Naturopathic Physicians from billing insurance. We discovered that the insurance companies were putting medically trained Naturopathic Physicians in the same pool as practitioners of the Evangelical Church and lay Naturopaths, both groups are not medically trained, and neither have graduated from an accredited medical program recognized by the United States government or the Rhode Island Department of Public Health.

In this meeting, Dr. Ottiano of Neighborhood Health raised the question on whether Naturopathic Physicians are safe. There are many studies that show Naturopathic Medicine is safe, specifically for cardiovascular disease, as an adjunct in Type 2 Diabetes, in Anxiety, and in Chronic Back Pain. Dr. Ottiano asked if we work collaboratively with Medical Doctors in the care of patients, and the answer is a resounding "Yes". In fact, many of the patients I treat have been referred to a functional medicine provider like me from their medical doctor. I am happy to send patient notes, lab reports, and progress notes on any patient I treat and do so regularly.

In the second meeting, we heard from the public, where patients discussed how Naturopathic Medicine is different from traditional medicine in our whole body approach to medicine. Patients testified about the direct benefit they experience as patients of Naturopathic Medicine. Catherine DeOrsy, PT, presented about her experience with Naturopathic Medicine and the cost savings it provided for her health insurance company. She carefully collected financial data on the amount of money that was saved by going to an out of pocket naturopathic physician. The cost savings to her health insurance company was in the tens of thousands because she worked with an ND who helped treat the root cause of her issue, not just the symptoms.

In the third meeting we heard from the RI Medical Society. In this meeting, the presenting medical doctor discussed how he felt Naturopathic Medicine would be taking away money from the traditional medical system. It was also discussed that there are 6000 licensed medical doctors in Rhode Island and there are 18 licensed Naturopathic Physicians. It hardly seems like the 18 NDs could take "a piece of the pie" as he had stated. We also heard testimony from a patient who had his life changed by the power of natural medicine, helping him to get off of addictive oxycodone for pain management.

Overall, I affirm that Naturopathic Physicians, medically trained and licensed, are a safe, effective patient care provider and should be eligible to be providers for HMOs. We are medically trained and graduated from accredited programs recognized by the United States government and licensed by the Department of Health. We are not associated with any religious group. We have been practicing in the state with zero issues brought to the Department of Health. We are committed to the health of all Rhode Islanders and would like to see equitable accessibility for all patients.

Sincerely,

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