

Issue Brief

Naturopathic Physician Licensing Act

Purpose.

The purpose of this issue brief is to provide the Committee with background information needed for naturopathic medical physicians/doctor licensing under the Wyoming Board Medicine. Licensing will allow naturopathic physicians to practice in Wyoming under a defined scope of practice.

What are Naturopathic Doctors (NDs)?

Licensed naturopathic doctors are health care professionals who are trained to provide primary care and diagnosis and treat patients of all ages and conditions. They are educated and trained at accredited naturopathic medical colleges.

ND's scope of practice does not go beyond training. Naturopathic physicians receive a Doctorate of Naturopathic Medicine from U.S. Department of Education accredited institutions; they are not Doctors of Chiropractic, Osteopathy or Medicine, nor do they practice as such.

What is Naturopathic Medicine?

Naturopathic medicine is “whole health” treatment that addresses the needs of each patient based on a cogent philosophy that treats the whole person. Therapeutics may include clinical nutrition, botanical medicine, homeopathic medicine, physical medicine, behavioral medicine, prescribed medications, and lifestyle recommendations.

How do Naturopathic Doctors differ from Medical Doctors?

Both NDs and MDs attend 4-year intensive professional programs after completing similar pre-med courses. Naturopathic colleges require students to have completed an undergraduate degree before starting medical school. The basic and core clinical sciences that NDs and MDs learn in school are almost identical.

How many states license NDs?

- 23 states have licensing or registration laws.
- 3 jurisdictions (the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands) have licensing or registration laws.
- States surrounding Wyoming have licensure, including North Dakota, Montana, Utah, Colorado, Idaho, Arizona, and New Mexico.

How will licensing NDs benefit Wyoming?

As trained primary care doctors, Naturopathic medicine emphasizes prevention, wellness, and the self-healing process to treat each person holistically. NDs collaborate with a broad range of disciplines from other health care professionals to come together as primary care teams.

Licensed naturopathic doctors are known for following a unique Therapeutic Order, an approach that identifies the natural order in which therapies should be applied to provide the greatest benefit with the least potential for harm.

By taking a primary care team approach, licensing NDs in Wyoming can

- Increase preventive care treatment.
- Increase primary care access in rural communities.
- Reduce health care costs.
- Reduce insurance costs.

What licensure will do.

- Allow Naturopathic Doctors to practice in Wyoming at the level they have been trained.
- Define qualification requirements for Naturopathic Doctors.
- Add Naturopathic Medicine under the Wyoming Board of Medicine, for administrative purposes, licensure requirements and disciplinary actions.

What this bill does not do.

- Grow government.
- Restrict practitioners of natural health modalities from practicing.
- Restrict the use of natural therapies to naturopathic physicians.
- Restrict the use of homeopathy to naturopathic physicians.

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Additional Information:

General and Licensure: The Wyoming Association of Naturopathic Physicians www.wyanp.org

Competencies: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/expert-panel-calls-for-nutrition-competencies-in-u-s-medical-education/>

Competencies: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/expert-panel-calls-for-nutrition-competencies-in-u-s-medical-education/>

Industry Testimony: <https://waysandmeans.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Hyman-Testimony.pdf>