



Alaska State Legislature

Representative Jennifer Johnston – House District 28

HOUSE BILL 91 SPONSOR STATEMENT

House Bill 91, by establishing a clear scope of practice for naturopathic doctors, aims to allow these primary health care providers in Alaska to practice consistent with their education and training.

Alaska's nearly 60 licensed naturopaths provide valuable health care services and can play an important role in helping address Alaska's primary care provider shortage. However, current state statute is vague as to the specific authorities of naturopaths, which has led to the adoption of some of the most restrictive naturopathic medicine regulations in the nation.

For example, despite being trained to perform a range of minor office procedures, such as sutures, wart removal, IUD placement and removal, naturopaths are prohibited from performing any of these routine procedures in Alaska. Similarly, many naturopaths have accredited pharmacological training, yet under current regulation are prohibited from writing prescriptions and must instead refer patients to other providers—even though those providers may have less advanced training. These overly restrictive regulations are causing many naturopaths to rethink practicing in Alaska.

HB 91 would correct this by outlining clear statutory guidelines, including, among other things, allowing licensed naturopathic practitioners to perform minor office procedures and to prescribe vitamins, minerals, and other non-controlled substance medications. This same scope is being practiced safely in other states and by other healthcare providers in Alaska with equal or lesser training.

Naturopathic medicine can provide valuable and complementary care in the Alaska health care setting. Many Alaskans struggle with basic health care access. The ability for naturopaths to practice the scope of medicine consistent with their training would immediately expand the availability of primary care in the state.

Many Alaskans face challenges with chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes, and hypertension. These are the sorts of issues for which naturopaths have clear tools to assist their patients. Naturopathic training focuses on disease prevention, rather than symptom and medication management alone. In the long-run, this type of care can provide cost-savings and improved health outcomes for consumers, insurers, and the state. HB 91 aims to let naturopathic medicine live up to this promise by allowing naturopathic doctors to practice within the scope of their training and education, thereby increasing competition in the healthcare sector and ensuring Alaskans have a range of options when choosing the style of healthcare that's right for them.