



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### H.B. 5294 – An Act Concerning Naturopaths

The Connecticut law governing the practice of naturopathic medicine was passed 95 years ago and has failed to keep pace with advances made by other states. The Modernization Act seeks to update the Scope of Practice definition to be consistent with standards already legislated in other states that license Naturopathic physicians. ***Specifically, we ask for your support to allow naturopathic physicians (NDs) the same prescriptive authority consistent with many other states that license NDs.***

Updating the Connecticut Naturopathic Practice Act enables NDs to serve their Connecticut patients' primary care needs, consistent with their ND training and education. The Act would also serve to retain vitally needed primary care doctors. This expansion would enhance the ability of NDs and MDs to develop integrated practices, an approach that is common in states with modernized scope of practice laws. These integrated practices are attractive to patients because they combine both the acute interventions of allopathic medicine with the longer-term restorative strategies of naturopathic medicine and holistic medicine.

There are five Naturopathic medicine schools accredited to teach this integrative and holistic approach to health and healing. The University of Bridgeport, College of Naturopathic Medicine (UBCNM), founded in 1997, is one of the five accredited colleges and has grown to be a nationally recognized Center of Excellence in the field of Naturopathic Medicine.

The four-year post-graduate ND education includes a curriculum with the same biomedical sciences as allopathic physician education for Medical Doctors (MDs). In fact, the UBCNM program actually requires more hours of basic and clinical science than many top medical schools. This rigorous standard and the misunderstanding among MDs about the value and importance of this profession has limited the size of UBs graduating classes, resulting in fewer qualified healthcare providers who could otherwise serve critical primary care roles in Connecticut. Many of these graduates move to states that have enlightened scope of practice laws to begin their practices.

The University of Bridgeport College of Naturopathic Medicine program presently has difficulty efficiently meeting its educational mission because of the current outdated law. The UB naturopathic program often meets some required accreditation competencies by sending students and interns out-of-state for components of their clinical training, as well as relying on patient/clinical scenario simulation. This diminishes the credibility of Connecticut's important position as the only state with a naturopathic medical college in the eastern U.S.

Perhaps most importantly, the current law limits the scope of health care services UB can provide to very needy populations who visit the busy *UB Clinics*.