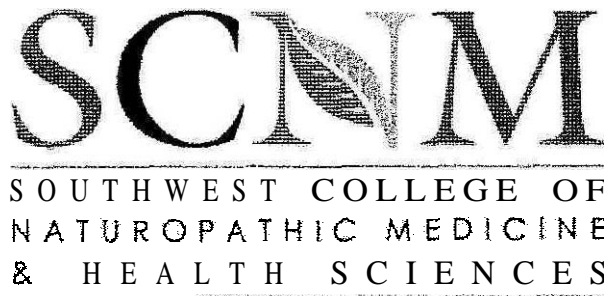


# HB 1717

Presented to  
The Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
Professional Licensure Committee

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By  
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Good morning Madame Chairman and distinguished members of the House Professional Licensure Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB1717.

My name is Dr. Paul Mittman. I serve as President and CEO of Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine & Health Sciences (SCNM), one of five accredited naturopathic medical schools in the United States. In addition to the Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine degree, I attended the University of Pennsylvania where I received a Doctor of Education. In the course of my career I practiced naturopathic medicine for 25 years, conducted research on natural therapies, authored articles for peer-reviewed journals (including the Journal of Family Practice), taught naturopathic medical students and worked with medical doctors and other professionals to improve the public's health in Arizona. I have served on many professional and non-profit boards including the American Holistic Medical Association, the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians, Gift of Life Arizona and the Tempe Community Action Agency.

### **Access to Qualified Case and Protection of the Public**

Passage of HB 1717 will serve two purposes. First, it will give the people of Pennsylvania access to care from qualified naturopathic doctors. Second, it will protect the public by regulating this profession of naturopathic doctors. HB 1717 accomplishes this by incorporating three critical components of professional regulation.

A safe and effective healthcare profession stands upon three structural pillars. Professionals, in this case naturopathic doctors, must:

1. Study at and graduate from accredited institutions of higher education.
2. Pass a standardized national licensure examination appropriate for entry-level doctors.
3. Abide by the relevant statutes and rules as overseen by the state's Board of Examiners.

I will focus my testimony on naturopathic medical education. While other individuals are more qualified to address the second and third pillars, I would like to point out that every Naturopathic Board of Examiners in the United States requires graduates from a naturopathic medical school to pass parts I and II of the Naturopathic Physicians Licensing Examination (NPLEX) to be eligible for licensure.

### **Naturopathic Medical Education**

Naturopathic medical education is a 4,000-hour, four-year first-profession doctoral program. Each prospective student must hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited undergraduate institution, with pre-med coursework (Biology, General Chemistry, Organic Chemistry/Biochemistry, Physics) to be eligible for admission. The admission process requires submission of official transcripts, essays and letters of recommendation. An in-person interview assesses a prospective student's academic and interpersonal skills. SCNM students are well qualified, matriculating with a mean cumulative GPA of 3.25-3.3 and a mean prerequisite GPA of 3.45-3.5.

The curriculum integrates Western biomedical science and conventional treatments with primary prevention practices – diet, exercise, stress management, and alternative therapies. The faculty who teach at naturopathic medical schools hold terminal degrees, (PhD, ND, MD, DO, PsychD, PharmD, etc.) appropriate to the courses they teach. The Basic Science curriculum is represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Basic Science Curriculum

Course (Class & Lab)	Credits
Anatomy & Embryology	10
Histology	4
Physiology	14
Biochemistry	12
Pathology	12
Microbiology/Immunology	10.5

Source: Bastyr University / Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges

Students study and demonstrate competency in history taking, performing physical examinations, ordering and interpreting laboratory studies and diagnostic imaging. Multidisciplinary teams of clinicians teach the Clinical Sciences including courses in physical and clinical diagnosis, cardiology, endocrinology, obstetrics and gynecology, gastroenterology, oncology, dermatology, neurology, orthopedics, minor surgery, otolaryngology and urology.

The complexity of individuals' health problems today requires a collaborative approach to patient care. Naturopathic medical students are trained to work with allopathic and osteopathic physicians and other health care providers, referring and co-managing patients when appropriate. Patients in this model, particularly those suffering from chronic conditions, receive conventional therapies and naturopathic approaches that focus on therapeutic life changes. The therapeutics curriculum is represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Naturopathic Therapeutics

Course	Credits
Nutrition	10
Counseling and Health Psychology	12

Structural Adjustment	11.5
Botanical Medicine	11
Pharmacology	5
Homeopathy	8

Source: Bastyr University /Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges

Third and fourth-year naturopathic medical students engage in 1300-1500 hours of clinical training, primarily in outpatient, and primary care settings. Students progress from observation to active participation in patient care, all under the direct supervision of a licensed practitioner (e.g., ND, MD, DO, DC). Naturopathic medical schools maintain an outpatient center, where thousands of patient visits take place each year. The clinics are state licensed and comply with all HIPPA, OSHA and COLA regulations. The 13,000 square foot SCNM Medical Center is pictured in Figure 3.

**Figure 3.** SCNM Medical Center



Naturopathic medical schools are committed to working with and caring for medically underserved communities. Students and clinical faculty provide care, either gratis or at reduced rates, to thousands of individuals every year. SCNM has a presence at nine community clinics, including a pediatric center at Hamilton Elementary School\*, Sojourner Center\* (for battered women and children), Mission of Merry (a mobile clinic at which allopathic, osteopathic and naturopathic medical

students work together), Educare (a collaboration with Scottsdale Healthcare Hospital), Southwest Center for HIV/AIDS Center, Royal Assisted Living Center', and Arizona Pathways\* (asterisk denotes a center staffed and administered by SCNM).

### **Accreditation**

All U.S. naturopathic medical schools are programmatically and regionally accredited. The Council on Naturopathic Medical Education (CNME), the only naturopathic accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, requires each school to comply with 11 criteria. The CNME assesses compliance via periodic self-studies, site visits and annual reports. Regional accrediting bodies (e.g., Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges) also require regular self studies and site visits, annual reports that track student retention and graduation rates, and student loan default rates. Default rates for graduates of naturopathic medical schools (who spend approximately \$100,000 on tuition alone) typically range from 0-3%. In addition, the Department of Education requires an Independent financial and compliance audit.

### **Conclusion**

Chronic diseases, including Heart disease, Diabetes, Stroke, Cancer and Arthritis, are the leading causes of death and disability today in the United States. Not only do they consume nearly 80% of our health care dollars, they are preventable. Naturopathic medical education prepares qualified graduates to work with physicians and other health care practitioners, to help stem the tide of this rising epidemic of chronic disease. With its focus on primary prevention – nutrition, exercise, stress management – and the judicious use of natural therapies, naturopathic medicine is an important component of patient-centered, team-based care.