

Michigan Natural Health Coalition

Alternative Health Care Threatened

Millions of Michigan citizens visit alternative health care providers each year and studies show that this number is increasing. In fact, a Harvard University study shows that 55% of all health related visits were to alternative/complementary practitioners!* However, according to Michigan's antiquated Medical Practice law, anyone who performs any type of diagnosis or treatment for any type of mental or physical ailment, injury, or condition of any kind must be a licensed medical doctor or other licensed health care provider - even if their treatment is not potentially harmful. (Remember that the purpose of requiring a license to practice is to protect citizens from harm, yet, the majority of alternative/complementary practitioners practice safely.)

This antiquated law affects your right to access these valuable-healing modalities. It also implies that practitioners of unlicensed therapies - including massage therapy, homeopathy, naturopathy, herbalism, ayurveda, Reiki, native or other indigenous forms of healing and even yoga are in violation of the law. **While this law is not routinely enforced, it has been used from time to time to prosecute practitioners even when no harm has been caused. This recently happened to Rebecca Rogers, a naturopathic doctor who was prosecuted even though she had caused no harm. As part of the process, all her records and equipment were confiscated which effectively ended her practice and she has used up all her life savings defending herself. She could now face jail time.**

The use of this antiquated law in this way protects no one and at the same time unjustly punishes practitioners who have caused no harm. It also tends to restrict access to useful healing modalities that the majority of the public deems beneficial.

In addition, the increasing popularity of alternative/complementary healing is drawing attention, and additional unnecessary restrictions on the practice of these benign healing methods are being considered. In effect, unless something is done, the number of choices we have for the practice or use of alternative/complementary healing could be greatly reduced.

The Solution

Last year landmark legislation was passed in Minnesota that remedies this situation. Now being called the Minnesota model, this legislation provides an exemption to the Medical Practice Act so that unlicensed healers are able to operate openly and freely without the need of a license - as long as they do not engage in certain potentially dangerous medical activities or claim to be licensed medical doctors. This legislation was passed overwhelmingly in Minnesota and is now in legislative process in New York, California, Rhode Island and other states. It is the purpose of the MNHC to educate the citizens of Michigan regarding laws appropriate for Michigan that guarantees the rights of all Michigan citizens to freely access or practice alternative/complementary health care without unnecessary government restrictions. A lobbying organization is also planned that will draft and pass necessary legislation.

Take Action Now!

If you believe in the value of alternative/complementary health care and would like to continue to access and/or practice it freely, then it is important that you take the following actions now: 1. Join our organization as a consumer or practitioner. 2. Make a donation. 3. Attend our rallies and take part in our activities and functions. 4. Inform and motivate all your friends and professional contacts to become members and to do the same

* Eisenberg DM, Davis RB, Ettnes SL, Appel S, Wilkey S, Van Rompay MV, Kessler RC. Trends in alternative medicine use in the United States, 1990-1997. *JAMA* 1998;280:1569-1575

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