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FYI
HB 2446

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Governor Michael L. Parson and Policy Staff:

I am writing on behalf of AMVETS Department of Missouri to express our strong support for House Bill 2446, which aims to allow for the licensure of naturopathic physicians within our state.

Despite the V.A. hiring specialists to provide more integrative care, Naturopathic Doctors (ND's) are currently not included in that pool. It is clear from the mission of the "Whole Health" Program established by the V.A. that ND's are a vital addition, and their inclusion should be worked towards in order to bring the program's full potential to light. Moving the needle of state legislation will open the door for this much needed shift and allow the V.A. to pursue this valuable profession within the Whole Health Program and beyond. It is important to note that the Whole Health program is in direct alignment with Naturopathic Medicine principles, and in fact, the VHA has entrusted two Whole Health Program sites to the direction of Naturopathic Doctors. Pursuing licensure of Naturopathic Doctors in Missouri is crucial in moving us one step closer to allowing veterans to access this vital medicine.

Collaboration between AMVETS and the Naturopathic community is not new. In 2015, a partnership was created when the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (AANP) and AMVETS circulated a "Dear Colleague" letter to national leaders to encourage the V.A. to employ licensed Naturopathic Doctors. This collaboration came about after a survey conducted by the AANP found that two-thirds of veterans (64%) would prefer a doctor who prescribes natural therapies *before* considering drugs or surgery, and that nearly three-quarters of veterans (73%) would consider seeing a ND if he or she were on staff at a nearby V.A. facility.

Until we can license these doctors within Missouri, the veterans of our great state will continue to suffer from chronic pain and other ailments without the full benefits of Naturopathic care and the opportunity to be included in the "Whole Health" program established by the V.A.

Currently, there are 26 states and territories that have licensed physicians of this kind. Kansas is the only border state that provides this service. Until Missouri moves forward, this program will inevitably be at a standstill, and veterans will continue to suffer.

Thank you kindly for your time and consideration of House Bill 2446 and Veterans!

Respectfully,

Diana L. Johnson, Executive Director
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