

THIRD READING

Bill No: SB 1303
Author: Wahab (D)
Amended: 4/28/26
Vote: 21

SENATE BUS., PROF. & ECON. DEV. COMMITTEE: 10-0, 4/20/26

AYES: Wahab, Choi, Archuleta, Caballero, Grayson, Menjivar, Niello,
Smallwood-Cuevas, Strickland, Umberg

NO VOTE RECORDED: Arreguín

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 5/14/26

AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

SUBJECT: Naturopathic Doctors Act

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill extends operations of the California Board of Naturopathic Medicine (CBNM or Board) to January 1, 2031; staggers board member terms; permits the Board to accept voluntary cancelation of a naturopathic doctor's (ND) license; authorizes CBNM to establish a fictitious name permit program; states Legislative intent to evaluate opportunities to expand services ND may provide; and makes technical and clarifying changes to the Naturopathic Doctors Act (Act).

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the Act for the purpose of licensing and regulating NDs. (Business and Professions Code (BPC) §§ 3610 et seq.)
- 2) Empowers the Board with sole responsibility for enforcing and administering the provisions of the Act. (BPC § 3620)

- 3) Provides that the Board shall consist of nine members – seven members appointed by the Governor, one public member appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules, and one public member appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly. Specifies that members of the board shall include five members who are California-licensed naturopathic doctors, two members who are California-licensed physicians and surgeons, and two public members and board members shall be appointed for a four-year term. (BPC § 3621(a), (b))
- 4) Requires applicants for licensure to pass the Naturopathic Physicians Licensing Examination (NPLEX) or an equivalent examination approved by the North American Board of Naturopathic Examiners or a substantially equivalent examination in the absence of an examination approved by the North American Board of Naturopathic Examiners. (BPC § 3631)
- 5) Authorizes the Board to grant a license to an applicant who has received a degree in naturopathic medicine from an approved naturopathic medical school where the degree substantially meets the current curriculum requirements of an approved program and has not committed an act or crime that constitutes grounds for denial under BPC § 480, but who graduated before 1986, before the Naturopathic Physicians Licensing Examinations, or NPLEX, and passed a state or Canadian Province naturopathic licensing examination, and submitted an application no later than December 31, 2007. (BPC § 3633.1)
- 6) Authorizes the Board to charge fees for application processing and licensing issuance. (BPC § 3680)
- 7) Provides that the Act shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2027. (BPC § 3686)

This bill:

- 1) States Legislative intent to work with stakeholders and the Board to evaluate opportunities to authorize naturopathic doctors to provide additional services to patients for which they are trained, educated, and qualified and that will expand access to safe, holistic, and preventive care for California's consumers.
- 2) Clarifies that board member appointments expire four years from the date of appointment.
- 3) Staggers Governor-appointed board member terms with two members serving an initial term of two years, two members serving an initial term of three years, and three members serving an initial term of four years.

- 4) Repeals board authority to grant a license to an applicant who graduated before 1986, before the NPLEX, and passed a state or Canadian province naturopathic licensing examination.
- 5) Authorizes the Board to accept voluntary license cancellation provided the request is not in lieu of administrative enforcement action.
- 6) Implements a fictitious name permit program, including eligibility criteria, causes for disciplinary action, and authority to adopt regulations.
- 7) Specifies that misuse of a fictitious name is unprofessional conduct.
- 8) Authorizes the Board to charge the following: 1) a fee of one half the current active license fee for an inactive license, 2) a fee for a fictitious name permit, and 3) a fictitious name permit renewal fee.
- 9) Extends the sunset date for the CBNM by four years, until January 1, 2031.

Background

Oversight Hearings and Sunset Review of the California Board of Naturopathic Medicine. The Board protects the health and safety of California consumers through licensing and regulating NDs. Its statutory authority is derived from the Act, a practice act governing both the use of the “naturopathic doctor” title and the scope of clinical services NDs are permitted to provide under California law. This includes diagnosing and treating patients using a variety of natural and conventional therapies, ordering diagnostic tests, performing minor office procedures, and in some cases, prescribing certain classes of pharmaceuticals, subject to specific statutory conditions.

In March 2026, the Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development Committee and the Assembly Committee on Business and Professions (Committees) began their comprehensive sunset review oversight of ten regulatory entities including the CBNM. The Committees conducted three oversight hearings. This bill and the accompanying sunset bills are intended to implement legislative changes as recommended by staff of the Committees, and which are reflected in the Background Papers prepared by Committee staff for each agency and program reviewed this year.

Board Expiration Dates. The Board currently has two vacancies and five of its seven appointed members serving in their second term or ineligible for a second term and serving in their grace year, including the Board President. Without staggering member terms, the Board could effectively be left with two remaining

board members. Without amending member terms, nearly the entire Board roster may need to be replaced at one time, which would place undue pressure on the appointments process and introduce instability to program operations that would be avoidable under a coordinated term expiration calendar. This bill modifies the next Governor board member appointment terms as follows: two members shall serve two-year terms, two members shall serve three-year terms, and three members shall serve four-year terms. Thereafter, all terms return to four-year terms.

Fictitious name permit program. A fictitious name, also known as a “DBA” (doing business as), is a business name that differs from the legal name of the individual or entity that owns the business and who is licensed by the Board. Currently, consumers may only know a practice by its business or fictitious name. When a consumer files a complaint, this lack of transparency adds a level of complexity to investigations that are meant to be filed against the responsible doctor in the corporation. According to the Board:

A Fictitious Name Permit (FNP) Program would improve the Board’s ability to protect the public by enhancing ownership transparency, allowing the consumer and the Board to identify the naturopathic doctor who is responsible for the corporation.

Additionally, BPC § 3674 prescribes naming conventions of naturopathic corporations, requiring they contain the words, “naturopathic” or “naturopathic doctor” and words to communicate its status as a corporation. Absent an FNP program, the Board is unable to proactively ensure BPC § 3674 compliance during the licensure process and instead, must enforce naming conventions on a reactive basis while investigating a complaint. The process of investigating and educating or citing and issuing an order of abatement for the licensee to correct the deficiency is less effective and more costly for the Board and licensees alike. Several healing arts programs within the Department already have this authority and successfully implemented fictitious name permit programs. This bill authorizes the CBNM to implement a fictitious name permit program for any naturopathic doctor, as a sole proprietor, or in a partnership, group, or professional corporation who wants to practice under a fictitious name, including setting application and renewal fees. This bill also establishes causes for discipline and designates misuse of a fictitious name as unprofessional conduct for that purpose.

Continued Regulation by the CBNM. The welfare of consumers is best preserved under the presence of a strong licensing and regulatory program to oversee NDs that can sustain its existence through license fees. Since its last sunset review, the Board has implemented significant policy changes that improve the Board’s

effectiveness in protecting consumers and taken steps to maintain a stable fund condition while increasing its enforcement presence. At the same time, the Board is experiencing instability in its pro rata payments, which increases the level of difficulty in managing its budget that larger programs with investigative staff are not required to navigate.

The profession should be recognized in statute by agencies that accept diagnoses from primary care providers and specialists about their patients' conditions to determine eligibility for state programs. This is especially importantly considering the majority of licensees are women who work in underserved communities whose residents may not have access to other providers. Finally, strong consideration should be given to removing barriers that prevent licensees from continuing practice in California, including reforms that promote legitimacy of the profession as highly trained primary care providers who deliver safe, effective, and comprehensive health care and integral contributors to California's health care system. This bill extends the Board's existence by four years to January 1, 2031.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, "The 2026-27 Governor's Budget provides approximately \$679,000 (Naturopathic Doctors Fund) and 3.0 positions to support the continued operation of the board's licensing and enforcement activities.

CBNM projects a revenue increase, from \$727,000 to \$805,000, from biennial license renewal cycles and the new Fictitious Name Permit (FNP) application and renewal fees. CBNM anticipates the FNP program is expected to generate approximately \$203,000 over four years. Any associated regulatory updates are anticipated to result in minimal, absorbable workload.

The Office of Information Services notes absorbable IT costs of \$16,000 to make updates to support the new FNP program."

SUPPORT: (Verified 5/15/26)

American Association of Naturopathic Physicians
Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges
California Board of Naturopathic Medicine
Council on Naturopathic Medical Education
Federation of Naturopathic Medicine Regulatory Authorities
The California Naturopathic Doctors Association

OPPOSITION: (Verified 5/15/26)

American Naturopathic Association
Associated Naturopathic Schools and Colleges of America
National Board of Naturopathic Examiners

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: The American Association of Naturopathic Physicians writes, “Allowing this regulatory structure to lapse would create gaps in oversight, weaken enforcement of title and practice protections, and undermine both patient safety and the Legislature’s ability to monitor and improve naturopathic regulation over time. Continued authorization of the Board through the sunset review process maintains public protection, licensing, enforcement, and scope oversight for safe, regulated naturopathic medical care.”

The Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges (AANMC) notes, “California is home to a growing population with increasing demand for preventive care, chronic disease management, and integrative approaches to health. It is also home to an AANMC member, the San Diego campus of Bastyr University. Licensed naturopathic doctors are trained to meet these needs, and maintaining a stable regulatory framework is essential to ensuring that patients have access to qualified providers. We respectfully urge your support of SB 1303 to ensure the continued oversight and stability of naturopathic medical practice in California.”

The California Board of Naturopathic Medicine writes that the Senate Bill (SB) 1303 amendments “makes a series of targeted updates to the Business and Professions Code, specifically the Naturopathic Doctors Act, to improve the effectiveness and clarity of the California Board of Naturopathic Medicine’s licensing and regulatory authority...These amendments collectively enhance transparency, regulatory efficiency, and public safety, while ensuring the board maintains modernized tools to oversee naturopathic medical practice in California. By updating outdated statutory provisions and aligning licensing processes with current standards, SB 1303 provides meaningful improvements that benefit both licensees and the consumers they serve.”

The Council on Naturopathic Medical Education writes in support, “Naturopathic doctors are well-positioned to help California with its ongoing challenges related to provider shortages, rising healthcare costs, and increasing rates of chronic disease. SB 1303 will allow naturopathic doctors to continue contributing their valuable services to the residents of California. We respectfully urge your support of SB 1303 to ensure the continued oversight and stability of naturopathic medical practice in California.”

The California Naturopathic Doctors Association states, “Licensure and regulation of the California naturopathic doctor profession by the California Board of Naturopathic Medicine provides California citizens with safe access to a licensed and regulated workforce that helps expand access to primary and preventive care, and an appropriate regulatory structure for the profession.”

The Federation of Naturopathic Medicine Regulatory Authorities (FNMRA) states it “supports for modernized regulation of naturopathic medicine in California. Reasonable regulation is integral to the safe practice of naturopathic medicine and protection of the public.” Additionally, “modernizing naturopathic medical regulation will effectively increase the number of safe primary care prescribers by improving access and efficient delivery of healthcare.”

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: The American Naturopathic Association (ANA) writes, “Rather than expanding title protection in violation of these reliance interests, the Legislature should reconsider whether continued licensure and regulatory expansion under the Act serves the public interest. Amending the act to clear up the board purview would solve all the issues the board is currently facing. For these reasons, we at the ANA respectfully Oppose SB 1303 unless amended.”

The Associated Naturopathic Schools and Colleges of America (ANSCA) writes that it “opposes SB 1303 unless amended. ANSCA respectfully urges the Legislature to recognize the distinction in education within both Naturopathy and Naturopathic Medicine, amendments such as the one we shall propose will maintain current statutory framework which has worked for over 25 years.”

The National Board of Naturopathic Examiners state, “we respectfully recommend that any legislative action include clear amendments to: (1) Preserve the lawful use of established professional titles by practitioners of naturopathy. (2) Clarify that regulatory authority over unlicensed complementary and alternative health care practices remains with the appropriate entities under existing law. (3) Ensure that the jurisdiction of the California Board of Naturopathic Medicine is limited to its licensed population. We oppose SB 1303 unless amended”

Prepared by: Yeaphana La Marr / B., P. & E.D. /
5/16/26 11:08:21

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