UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Bill No: SB 1303
Author: Wahab (D)
Amended: 8/26/26
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

SENATE FLOOR: 39-0, 5/27/26
AYES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener
NO VOTE RECORDED: Dahle

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 74-0, 8/30/26 - See last page for vote

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; expands accreditation options available to approved naturopathic medical education programs; requires unlicensed naturopaths who use protected titles to disclose their unlicensed status to their clients; authorizes the Board to cite and fine any person

who practices or advertises to practice as an ND without a valid license; and makes technical and clarifying changes to the Naturopathic Doctors Act (Act).

Assembly Amendments authorize the Board to approve schools accredited by entities other than the U.S. Department of Education; require unlicensed naturopaths who use protected titles to disclose their unlicensed status to their clients, as specified, and state that they are not naturopathic doctors in advertisements; and subjects a person who practices, attempts to practice, advertises, or holds themselves out to practice as an ND without a valid license to a fine of up to $10,000, up to a year in county jail, or both.

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 and initial term of four years.

4) Allows graduates from naturopathic medical education programs that meet either of the following to apply for licensure:

   a) The program is accredited by the Council on Naturopathic Medical Education (CNME) or another accreditor that is substantially equivalent to CNME, as determined by the board.

   b) The program is housed in an institution that is accredited by an agency recognized by either the federal Department of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and the program meets standards substantially equivalent to those required by CNME, including supervised clinical training and outcomes.

5) 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.

6) Authorizes the Board to accept voluntary license cancelation provided the request is not in lieu of administrative enforcement action.

7) States any person who practices, attempts to practice, or advertises as practicing naturopathic medicine without being licensed by the Board is guilty

of a public offense, punishable by a fine of up to $10,000, imprisonment up to a year in county jail, or both.

8) Requires a person who practices unlicensed naturopathy, and uses a protected title, to disclose in advertisements that they are not an ND, provide their clients with a statement in plain language that complies with BPC § 2053.6 and that discloses they are not an ND, obtain a written acknowledgement that the client was provided with the required information, provide a copy to the client, and maintain a copy of the written acknowledgement for three years.

9) Implements a fictitious name permit program, including eligibility criteria, causes for disciplinary action, and authority to adopt regulations.

10) Specifies that misuse of a fictitious name is unprofessional conduct.

11) 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.

12) 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.

Unlicensed Activity. Placement of title protection for an unregulated population within the Act is the primary reason consumers file complaints against unlicensed naturopaths with the Board. Equally cause of confusion for consumers is the similarly phrased titles – the licensed "naturopathic doctor" and unlicensed and unregulated "naturopath" – that lead consumers to file complaints with the Board.

Naturopathy is a broadly used term encompassing approximately 50 types of complementary and alternative health-care practitioners. Practitioners who might use a naturopath title include those practicing homeopathy, hydrotherapy, reflexology, iridology, nutritional therapy, acupressure, and others. These practitioners may lawfully provide services that do not require medical training or credentials, so long as they comply with the requirements of the Medical Practice Act (BPC § 2053.6). Specifically, naturopaths must disclose to a client in writing: 1) that the practitioner is not a licensed physician; 2) the treatment is alternative or complementary to healing arts services licensed by the state; 3) the services to be provided are not licensed by the state; 4) the nature of the services to be provided; 5) the theory of treatment upon which the services are based; and 6) the practitioner's educational, training, experience, and other qualifications regarding the services to be provided.

In addition to being protected from violating the Medical Practice Act if the above requirements are met, complementary and alternative health care practitioners are permitted to use the titles of "Naturopath," "Naturopathic practitioner," or "Traditional naturopathic practitioner," by the Act if the person using the title is educated and trained as the title suggests. However, the requisite education and training are not prescribed, and Board licensure is not required (BPC § 3645).

This bill requires a person who practices unlicensed naturopathy, and uses a protected title, to disclose in advertisements that they are not an ND, provide their

clients with a statement in plain language that complies with BPC § 2053.6 and that discloses they are not an ND, obtain a written acknowledgement that the client was provided with the required information, provide a copy to the client, and maintain a copy of the written acknowledgement for three years.

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, an 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 fictious 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. This bill extends the Board's existence by four years to January 1, 2031.

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

Costs of approximately $761,000 per year to continue operation of the Board. The Board anticipates minor and absorbable costs for an increase in workload to create and implement retired status, as well as increases in revenue. DCA anticipates absorbable costs for system updates to support the new fictitious name permit program.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/26/26)

California Naturopathic Doctors Association
California Naturopathic Medicine Board

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/26/26)

None received on this version of the bill.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: The California Naturopathic Doctors Association writes, "Licensure and regulation ensure that only individuals who meet California's education and competency standards (SB 907) are eligible to practice as licensed naturopathic doctors. The CBNM verifies compliance with continuing medical education requirements, enforces applicable scope-of-practice standards as outlined in SB 907, and provides an appropriate regulatory structure to protect the public. Continued regulation by the CBNM, therefore, ensures Californians have safe access to a qualified and accountable workforce that contributes to primary and preventive care."

The California Naturopathic Medicine Board writes, "SB 1303 makes targeted, meaningful updates to the Business and Professions Code to improve clarity, transparency, and enforcement efficiency. Collectively, these amendments modernize the regulatory framework, improve transparency, and enhance public safety while maintaining efficient and practical oversight tools. SB 1303 updates outdated statutory language, aligns licensing processes with current standards, and strengthens consumer protection in areas where clarity and accountability are most needed."

Assembly Floor 74 0 5
Ayes: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle

Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas Noes: No Vote Recorded: Arambula, Chen, DeMaio, Sharp-Collins, Ta

Prepared by: Yeaphana LaMarr / B. P., & E. D. / (916) 651-4104
11/6/26 10:59:34

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