



For Immediate Release

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Federal Court Grants Preliminary Injunction Requiring Department of Education to Treat Naturopathic Medicine as a Professional Degree

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges (AANMC), the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (AANP), and the Naturopathic Medical Student Association (NMSA) welcomed a federal court’s decision granting a preliminary injunction in their challenge to the U.S. Department of Education’s rule redefining “professional degree” for federal student loans.

In *AANMC, AANP, NMSA v. Department of Education*, the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon on October 16 ordered the Department to treat the Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine (ND) as a “professional degree,” and students pursuing the ND as “professional students,” for the plaintiff organizations and their members while the case proceeds. The court concluded that the plaintiffs are likely to succeed on their claim that the Department exceeded its authority by adding requirements to the definition Congress adopted, and that the Department departed from more than two decades of treating the ND as a professional degree without adequate explanation.

The decision adds to other federal court rulings finding that the Department likely exceeded its statutory authority in narrowing the definition of professional degree. In June, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia stayed the rule’s added requirements nationwide in a challenge brought by the American Association of Nurse Practitioners and a coalition of health care and education organizations. In August, the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts similarly found the added requirements were inconsistent with the statute in a case brought by the American Nurses Association.

“This is an important step forward for naturopathic medical students and for the patients who depend on a strong pipeline of naturopathic doctors,” said AANP President Jaquel Patterson, ND, MBA. “The court recognized what we have said from the beginning: the ND is a rigorous, doctoral-level professional degree, and federal policy should treat it that way.”

“Our colleges prepare naturopathic doctors to diagnose and treat patients, and this ruling gives our students and institutions meaningful relief while the case moves forward,” said JoAnn Yanez, ND, MPH, CAE, AANMC Executive Director. “We are grateful the court took a careful look at the education our graduates receive.”

“Students shared deeply personal stories with the court about how this rule threatened their education and their futures,” said Desta Golden, ND, NMSA Executive Director. “We are grateful the court listened, and proud to have stood up for every student pursuing this profession.”

The preliminary injunction provides temporary relief while the litigation continues. The Department has the right to appeal, but in the meantime the case will proceed toward a final ruling in federal court.

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About the AANMC:

The Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges (AANMC) is a nonprofit organization representing accredited and recognized naturopathic medical education programs in the United States and Canada. AANMC advances excellence in naturopathic medical education, supports collaboration among member institutions, and promotes awareness of accredited naturopathic medical education and career pathways. Through education, advocacy, and strategic partnerships, AANMC works to strengthen the future of the naturopathic medical profession. For more information, visit www.aanmc.org.

About the AANP:

The American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (AANP) is the professional association that represents licensed naturopathic physicians. The AANP strives to make naturopathic medicine available to every American and to increase recognition of naturopathic physicians as the identified authorities on natural medicine. Learn more at www.naturopathic.org.

About the NMSA:

The Naturopathic Medical Student Association (NMSA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to representing and supporting naturopathic medical students across accredited naturopathic medical programs in North America. Through student advocacy, leadership development, professional networking, educational programming, and collaboration with academic and professional organizations, NMSA empowers future naturopathic doctors and strengthens the naturopathic medical profession. NMSA works to ensure that student perspectives are represented in decisions affecting naturopathic medical education and the future of healthcare.