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FLOOR DEBATE

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under the \$20,000 cap. Now for each year of the loan, the borrower agrees to practice one full year in an approved specialty in a designated health profession shortage area in Nebraska, and agrees to accept Medicaid patients. Now if the borrower does not fulfill this agreement, he or she must repay 100 percent of the outstanding loan principal, with interest at a rate of 24 percent simple interest per year. Now the purpose of the Nebraska Rural Health Advisory Commission is to advise HHS, the Legislature, the Governor, the university, and the citizens of Nebraska, regarding all aspects of rural healthcare. And one of their specific duties is to identify problems in the delivery of healthcare in rural Nebraska. Now the commission has designated 88 counties as psychiatry/mental health shortage areas within the state of Nebraska. And as we're all aware, LB 1083 was introduced this year, and has advanced from the committee, and the goal behind LB 1083 is to establish more community-based services for persons with mental illness, thereby reducing our reliance on the regional centers. Now with this proposed community-based mental health initiative, the need for providers, especially in rural areas, will be significant. The commission recognized this need, and recommended legislation be introduced to add graduate-level mental health students to the student loan program. Now the money that will be used to fund this program is going to come from the loan repayment program, where the students that didn't fulfill the necessary requirements of the program, and they paid back their loan money. That's where this money is going to come from. It's going to take no General Fund money. And this...there should be enough money to last in this program for a minimum of four years from now. And the amendment also adds the emergency clause, so students that are going into the profession this next year can qualify for that. And with that, I would entertain any questions. And I would ask for your favorable vote on AM2910. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Cunningham. You've heard the opening on AM2910, which is an amendment to LB 1005. Open for discussion on that amendment. Senator Johnson.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. President, members of the body, as you can tell, my voice isn't very good, so I won't speak very long. But