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FLOOR DEBATE

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Insurance Company, one of the nation's largest medical liability carriers and a major insurer for Nebraska hospitals and physicians, who wrote policies for as many as 17,000 physicians nationwide, announced last year it was getting out of the business. Other remaining carriers are being highly selective, and every insurer has imposed stricter underwriting standards. According to a survey of the nation's 42 BlueCross BlueShield companies, the medical malpractice insurance crisis is threatening health care affordability and access to care. The BlueCross BlueShield survey supports a study by American Medical Association identifying states in full-blown medical liability crisis, including Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington, and West Virginia. The BlueCross BlueShield survey highlights the impact that rising malpractice premiums can have upon a community's access to care and to the cost of that care. Higher and higher premiums make it nearly impossible for many doctors to practice medicine, and if doctors don't practice medicine it's hard to have good health care. Without insurance, they cannot afford to treat patients. Rising malpractice premiums pose a problem, including patient facing reduced access to care. This will be particularly true and noticeable in rural communities, where doctors and hospitals are vital to that community's growth and welfare. This is an issue of importance, and no one...and one that we cannot any longer ignore. I ask for your support. I would advise you that I have had circulated among you a pink sheet of paper that, in essence, tells what LB 146 is about. And, in addition to LB 146, as I have proposed it to you, there is an amendment by the Judiciary Committee to bring in two allied matters with connection with the medical malpractice concerns, and that will be in the...in a portion of this pink slip and I give you this just for your reference. And I now would advise you that the committee has made some amendments and I will say that Senator Brashear, on behalf of the committee, will present those amendments to you. Thank you.

SPEAKER BROMM: Thank you, Senator Pederson. We now have committee amendments, and recognize Senator Brashear to open on the committee amendments. (Visitors introduced.) Senator Brashear, to open on the committee amendments.