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March 23, 2006 LB 994

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Johnson. Further discussion? Senator Cunningham.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Well, thank you, Senator Cudaback and members. At this late hour I'm not going to take much time, but I do stand in support of this amendment. Senator Jensen has done a good job explaining the amendment, and Senator Johnson has offered some good points, too. But what I would like to stress is we are short of mental health practitioners in rural Nebraska. We have 88 out of the 93 counties that are considered a shortage of mental health practitioners. We have 15 counties with no mental health practitioners; 23 counties with one mental health practitioner, and as Senator Johnson and Jensen have stated, actually the number is 5,500 total patients--not patients, but what is it--visits per year; 3,500 of them are in the rural areas. Right now the rural programs are in Columbus, Hastings, Fremont, Plattsmouth, Nebraska City, Valley, Kearney, Chadron, Crawford, and Gordon. And as Senator Johnson and Jensen both stated, when these people are trained in those areas, they are more apt to stay in those areas. I think the number was 54 percent of them stay in the rural areas. So with that, I'm going to close, but I do urge your support of this amendment.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Cunningham. Further discussion? Seeing no lights on, anything further on the amendment, Mr. Clerk? Senator Jensen, you're recognized to close.

SENATOR JENSEN: I'd just ask for adoption of AM2537. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Jensen. You've heard the closing. The question before the body is adoption of AM2537 to LB 994. All in favor vote aye; opposed, nay. Voting on adoption of the Byars amendment. Have you all voted on the amendment who care to? Please record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 28 ayes, 0 nays, Mr. President, on the adoption of Senator Byars' amendment.