

significantly and as that occurs it's harder to maintain the base in which to support a hospital, to support a doctor, to support the different medical needs of that area and so it compounds itself and becomes less attractive and people may again move as a result of that and I see this as a spiral we need to pull out of. In addition, as the ability to support medical personnel deteriorates as the population erodes, so too, however, do we see a need for increased medical care because of the aging population in our rural areas. As more young people leave our rural towns and areas, small towns of the state, we have an older population that has greater medical needs and so the demand is greater for medical care but the base to support it is shrinking. This is a problem that only looks like, from the demographics I have seen, getting worse. So that means innovation, it means initiative, it means change. This proposal helps. Other ideas will be forthcoming. I think we need to be more flexible on scope of practice. We have to be more flexible on some of the standards we have for our rural areas, some of that is embodied in other legislation we have, but clearly the problems we have today, severe as they are, are only going to get worse over time and so I think calling attention to the problem, trying to address it isn't going to be an ongoing struggle and every step forward we take will help, but there's a number of additional initiatives that will be needed over time and I'm very supportive of this bill and hope that we can do some more again in the future as well.

**SPEAKER BAACK:** Thank you, Senator Wesely. Senator Vrtiska.

**SENATOR VRTISKA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members of the body, I, too, rise in support of this legislation. I think as has been already alluded to, it's very important that we continue to remember that there are people out there in the country who do not have adequate medical facilities or the staff to tend to these. As many of you know I have taken a bill that is similar to this to help bring some doctors into the rural areas and certainly we need the backup of nurses and other practitioners in this area. So I hope that you would support this bill and get it up so we can get it passed and bring this assistance to the people, particularly in some of the outlying areas of the state and also in my particular area. So I urge you to support this bill. Thank you very much.

**SPEAKER BAACK:** Thank you, Senator Vrtiska. Senator Cudaback.