

explaining why I decided to take this bill as a priority, and why I think it is very important for this body to consider the advancement of this bill. There is no question in anybody's mind that lives in the rural areas that we do need family practice physicians out there. In my particular area in southeast Nebraska at the present time, we have the towns of Auburn, Humboldt, Pawnee City, and now Tecumseh, all looking for doctors. These are communities who have had physicians over the years and have had trouble retaining them because many of the doctors have retired and are no longer there, and it is not the easiest issue to try to convince some of these doctors to move out into these rural areas to practice. I think that this is what the purpose of LB 152, and that is to encourage some of these doctors to go in underserved areas in the rural parts of Nebraska to set up a family practice. This bill offers to partially reimburse these institutions for the stipends and benefits that they provide under the residents with additional incentives. This sends a message to our operating family practice residency that they need to promote the needs of the rural area, areas like mine, when we are trying to get residents out there. I realize, as most of you do, that this costs money, and I guess what it boils down to is what are your priorities? And I understand, and I respect the fact that this is a parochial issue in the eyes of many of us because we are trying to determine how we can get doctors to serve the areas where we live. I guess I need to also have you understand that out of the 29 UNMC graduates in 1992, only 13 stayed for a family practice residency. And yet at the same time, we understand and the records show that over the next approximately 8 years there will be approximately 267 rural Nebraska physicians who will probably either retire or leave their practices in rural Nebraska. And I also want you to understand with me that there are, right at the present time, over 60 communities in Nebraska that are seeking family physicians to move into their areas to serve the people in those rural areas. The bottom line of this whole issue is that we are not turning out doctors in family practice as fast as we are losing them. And if we can't find some way to train more of these family physicians to move into rural areas, we are going to see more and more problems as far as health care services in these areas. This bill simply allows private practice programs to offer more opportunities for family practice residents, and at the same time promote and help fulfill the needs of our rural and other underserved areas of Nebraska. I, as I said earlier, took this bill as a priority bill because I understand its importance to the people that I