

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Health and Human Services Committee February 25, 2021
Rough Draft

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ARCH: Good morning and welcome to the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is John Arch. I represent the 14th Legislative District in Sarpy County. I serve as Chair of the HHS Committee. I'd like to invite the members of the committee to introduce themselves starting on my right with Senator Murman.

MURMAN: Good morning, I'm Senator Dave Murman. I represent District 38. That is seven counties to the west, south, and east of Kearney and Hastings.

WILLIAMS: Matt Williams from Gothenburg, Legislative District 36: Dawson, Custer, and the north portion of Buffalo Counties.

M. CAVANAUGH: Machaela Cavanaugh, District 6, west central Omaha, Douglas County.

ARCH: Also assisting the committee is one of our legal counsels, T.J. O'Neill, our committee clerk, Geri Williams, and our committee pages, Sophie and Jordon. A few notes about our policies and procedures. First, please turn off or silence your cell phones. This morning, we'll be having hearings on two gubernatorial appointments and taking them in the order listed on the agenda outside the room. The appointee will begin with an opening statement. After the opening statement, the committee members will have the opportunity to ask questions. Then we'll ask concerning supporters and opponents and those that would like to testify in a neutral capacity. When you come up to testify, please begin by stating your name clearly into the microphone and then please spell both your first and last name. We request that you wear a face covering while in the hearing room. Testifiers may remove their face covering during testimony to assist committee members and transcribers in clearly hearing and understanding the testimony. Pages will sanitize the front table and chair between testifiers. This committee has a strict no props policy. With that, we will begin today's gubernatorial appointments with Diane Schutt. Welcome.

DIANE SCHUTT: Morning.

ARCH: You may begin.

DIANE SCHUTT: Is this on? OK. My name is Diane Schutt, D-i-a-n-e S-c-h-u-t-t. I am from Fairbury, Nebraska right now. I taught high

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school English and journalism in Fairbury for 35 years, and I retired in 2014. My quest or my journey to become a member of the commission started many years ago, I would guess. And it's been a, a lifelong learning experience. I was 22, 23 years old when we first diagnosed that I had a hearing loss. And so of course I hadn't been in any wars and I hadn't worked in a factory, which were questions that they asked me to have that much of a hearing loss. So I had all sorts of tests done and Boys Town. So what they determined was that it just seems to be my own little genetic birth defect and why it triggered at 22 or 23, they don't know. But the good thing is that I had my speech, and under normal conditions, without the pandemic, I can read lips really well. And that served me well when I was teaching teenagers. So I now look back and I have been hard of hearing longer than I wasn't hard of hearing. So as I, I grew when I learned about hearing loss and things like that, I realized that there was a hearing commission and I got the news letters from the hearing commission and they asked for people to turn in names to see if, you know, we might be interested. And so I did. And I never heard anything about them and I didn't think about it. And suddenly one day in September, I got an email from John Wyvill and he said, you know, hey, the Governor's appointed to you to the hearing commission. And so I said, OK. And so then I kind of vaguely remember that about three years ago had filled in that, that application. So my first round, I just took over somebody's spot in the commission and then I ran for or was nominated again for a position. And so this is my second round. I've been very impressed with Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, John Wyvill is a, a force to be reckoned with. And we've done many positive things. There's so much to learn. I don't sign well. And the interpreters, the mix of people that we have on our board and we have people that are totally deaf and we have hard of hearing and then we have people who have children who have hearing issues, but they can hear, is just phenomenal. And I have learned so much about what we can do as a state for people. I was very proud that we were involved with giving a hearing aid coverage for children from birth to 18, because if you can get your speech at an early age, you know you can conquer the world. So I-- I'm very humbled to be on that board. And I feel like every time we meet and we do something, I'm learning new, new things. And I don't think that, you know, when I'm done serving on the board that I'm ever going to forget all of these things that I have learned and how much these people have accomplished. I know it's, it's

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just an ongoing struggle when you have a hearing loss to try and function in the real world. And I'm very pleased that these people are committed to, to giving others a chance to have a chance at a real life.

ARCH: Thank you. Are there any questions from the committee?

DIANE SCHUTT: I've got a satellite delay here with her sometimes, so.

ARCH: Senator Cavanaugh.

M. CAVANAUGH: Thank you for being here and for your service on the board. I was curious, what are you interested in accomplishing in the next term on the board?

DIANE SCHUTT: We kind of discussed that we've accomplished a couple of wonderful things with the hearing, legislation for aids for kids from birth to 18. And we also got ASL recognized as a legitimate language. So I think what we're trying to focus on now, we were approached by members of UNL that have the deaf education classes, and there's a, a gap between when they get the degree and when they can really have the competency to be an interpreter, which I didn't understand until I came on the board. So we're trying to work and find ways to help bridge that gap. I think right now we're kind of in a research phase and, and studying what we can do. The reasoning behind it is you do not want to have-- we have a shortage of interpreters in the state and, and other areas. You don't want to lose those people that want to be an interpreter. And if they can't do something to make money, they go and do something else. And so then you lose those people from that pool. So I, I think that's one of the next thing that we, that we want to work on. But I don't think we're to the point yet where we're ready to act on anything. We're still fact-finding.

ARCH: Thank you. Other questions? Senator Hansen.

B. HANSEN: I got a question. Sorry I was here late, I was at a meeting. So I don't know if anybody asks this already before, but, like, statistically in Nebraska, is, is there an increase in the amount of people who need assistance with hearing impairments? Do you see like a trend going upward or do you see it going downward?

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DIANE SCHUTT: I don't-- I know what I see in the paper and what I, and what I read. And I think that there's probably always been a lot of people who couldn't hear. And I think there's more awareness of it now. And especially with the masks, I'm hearing from many people that said I didn't realize I couldn't hear, you know, that I depended on reading lips. And of course, kids are blasting all of the sound into their ears now because they're indestructible and so nothing's going to happen to them. So I, I think you're probably going to see that trend go up. There's some things now that we've learned because, you know, my dad was-- worked at Farmland Industry and he was around machinery all the time. And you know nobody had the headsets or the ear plugs or anything. And so he was very hard of hearing by the time, you know, he got older. So we, we gain some ground sometimes, but I think we lose. I've noticed that even on television now, though, that the rock stars have their, their plugs in, they give them the feedback without blasting their ears or whatever.

B. HANSEN: I think that's one of the concerns I heard, is the earbuds, you know, that we use now is like-- is the new machinery. You know, people used to become hearing impaired because of machinery. Now it's the ear buds and especially with teleconferencing and Zoom meetings, everyone's got them in. And, again, they're playing music and other kinds of things, too. And I know that's a growing concern that I saw recently. Not now, but like maybe five, ten years down the road, we're going to start seeing a lot of issues, maybe even in the state of Nebraska. So might see an increased need for people who can interpret, people who can understand those kind of issues. So I, I-- thanks. I'm sorry, didn't mean to ramble.

DIANE SCHUTT: Well, I think it was-- I can't remember the person, it was somebody in The Who wasn't it that said, you know, oh what a bunch of babies wearing these ear coverings. And then he got older and said, OK, I can't hear.

B. HANSEN: Yeah, thank you.

ARCH: Other questions? I, I have one additional. You, you became hard of hearing early adulthood. How have you seen technology change since that time and today and how has it benefited, has it benefited you?

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DIANE SCHUTT: Well, I've decided that you have to be deaf or hard of hearing now would be the time to do it. I think down the road, the hair cells, my hearing loss seems to be the hair cells and so internal. But you-- it's the same principle of being able to restore paralysis. So if you can restore that, you can also make some inroads in the restoring hearing for people. I believe sharks or something regenerate the hair cells in their ears. The first hearing aids that I got were big, bulky things because, you know, I had a significant hearing loss for somebody as young as I was. And it was an adjustment to do that. And over the years, those hearing aids got smaller and smaller. I just got a brand new set that does all sorts of things. You don't have to put batteries in them, they go on a charger. They automatically adjust to different sounds. If the sound is too loud, they take it down. I don't have the updated phone yet, but it's supposed to, like, feed into your phone so that I can actually, you know, take phone calls on the cell instead of just texting, cochlear transplants. You know, it's, it's a whole new ballgame, you know. The only bad thing is the cost and the expense. So I was glad we were able to get that legislation through for the young people. I've lost track of how many hearing aids I paid for. And somebody told me about Voc Rehab, which is a great thing, and they do help pay for part of it. But to get what you really need, then you pay again. So I'm paying \$2,300 out of my personal money to, to get these good really hearing aids.

ARCH: All right, thank you. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. Thanks for serving. And so the committee will, will discuss your appointment and if approved, we will forward it out to the floor for full debate.

DIANE SCHUTT: OK.

ARCH: So.

DIANE SCHUTT: OK.

ARCH: Thank you.

DIANE SCHUTT: Thank you.

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ARCH: Are there any proponents? Are there any opponents? Is there anyone that would like to testify in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, this will close the gubernatorial appointment hearing for Diane Schutt. We will now open the appointment hearing for David Hansen. Good morning.

DAVID HANSEN: Morning. Greetings, Senator Arch and the rest of the committee. I'm David Hansen, D-a-v-i-d H-a-n-s-e-n. I'm here, as you know, for being considered for the Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Fund Board, which after I introduce myself a little bit, I was going to tell a little bit about that. Senator Arch and I talked about that I could address that. I have a Ph.D. in clinical psychology that I earned from the University of Mississippi that came after my bachelor's degree in psychology from Creighton in Omaha. I grew up in Omaha. I'm licensed as a psychologist in Nebraska since 1992. In 1992, I moved to, to, to Lincoln to become faculty at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Department of Psychology. I'm a professor of, of psychology and I've had a variety of administrative appointments over the years, including currently I'm serving as director of our Clinical Psychology Training Program, which is a doctoral program, and our Interdisciplinary Law Psychology Program. My work, I have a lot of clinical and research interests that relate to child abuse and neglect, including prevention issues, assessment, and intervention with children and families. One example of that over the years is I developed-- led or developed and led a program we call Project Safe, which is for children who've experienced sexual abuse and their families, the nonoffending family members, providing some clinical services for them after, after the experience of victimization. We've done that since 1998. I've done that in conjunction with the Child Advocacy Center here in Lincoln, including we've been providing onsite services, though the pandemic has disrupted that along with many other things. We'll get back to that. In fact, we've served-- through that program, we've served more than 1,200 families. My research interests are, are, are-- have primarily been in child maltreatment. I do other work over the years, social skills research, other kinds of things. But a lot of my work is in child abuse and neglect. I have probably-- near half of my publications are, are directly related to, to child maltreatment. I was-- I'm actually-- many of you were on this group a year ago. I was actually here just over a year ago, just under a-- yeah, just over a year ago for an initial appointment. I'm already had

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been a member of the Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Fund Board for a, for a one-year appointment. I basically finished a term that had been open. So I had to, had to-- the Governor has then initiated the reappointment for me now to have a three-year term pending your approval and, of course, the rest of the Legislature. So if it seems familiar or if you've seen me here before, I know some of, some of you have. I want to tell a little bit about the Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Fund Board. Keep in mind, I'm still learning the-- as a, as a newer member, it provides grant funds to support research-based prevention strategies through, through community collaborations is certainly a priority and including keeping in mind services throughout the state. It also provides supports for training and technical assistance to community grantees, say, to advance the skills of therapists serving families who might have problems of child abuse and, and neglect. There are nine board members when the board is full, there's two representatives from Department of Health and Human Services who have key involvement. And then there's seven appointed from across the street-- from across the state by the Governor. So that's why I would be here, here today. The board elects a-- has a-- elects a president. The current president is Shelly McQuillan, who's a medical social worker in Ogallala. And then, as I said, there's key HHS involvement, including I think they're valuable and, and important for keeping-- communicating with, of course, the state, but also keeping track of funds and, and spending and so forth. There's also significant involvement by the Nebraska Children and Families and Found-- Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, which portion of the grant fund-- the funds of the board-- that are allotted, go towards some coordination management by that. And that, in my observations over the year, is incredibly valuable because they're so involved in a variety of, of relevant state efforts. And there's some terrific staff there that help a lot of oversight of, of more day-to-day, month-to-month activities. And then the kinds of things that I've seen funds going toward are a variety, as I mentioned, some have been toward training professionals, so there's a, a, a commonly used and effective evidence-based intervention called Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, which is good for helping, helping parents deal with children with significant emotional and behavioral problems in a, in a safe and appropriate and effective way. So the-- several funds have gone to support training of mental health professionals from throughout the state and advancing skills there. There's efforts to

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also another intervention evidence-based intervention, Circle of Security Parenting, that's designed to help caregivers connect and support their children and promote secure attachments, which, of course, is important. And so that's also been-- professionals have been involved and engaged in learning and implementing the Circle of Security Parenting. They support some endeavors called Community Cafés, which are in communities throughout the state that connect families with resources and with, with each other, which is, you know, a valuable strategy for helping families have kind of support and information and opportunities that they might need. Some funds go toward public awareness campaigns, radio ads, and web-based communications. I think over the years they've increased kind of the web presence, social media and web presence. The-- I think a fair amount of that goes toward events in April. April is Child Abuse Prevention Fund month. Recent endeavor that they've been-- that some funds have gone toward is something called Think Make Create Labs, which are-- it's a kind of a, a one shot expense to help after school programs, schools, community organizations that have, have things for kids after school that, as you would guess from the name, Think Make Create, there are trailers that are set up with lots of supplies and resources and so forth that people can engage kids in a variety of tasks that might teach them engineering and construction kinds of principles or gardening or other kinds of things. And that's been a, a, a relatively recent endeavor. And then I guess one other thing that comes to mind for me, that is one of the ways the funds are used is there's an annual evaluation, a program evaluation that's gone on, I, I think, for a long time. I know they're available on, on web page where they-- experts and program evaluation at UNMC do a-- do an annual evaluation of the board's effort, so. That seemed loud enough, I assumed I needed to wait. The-- so that's a bit about me and the board. And, and, and one thing that I, that I hadn't noted that, that I, I, I, I take pride in noting is, is I'm also known as Senator Matt Hansen's dad, so. Kind of funny that came right after that.

ARCH: All right. Thank you very much. Questions? Senator Williams.

WILLIAMS: Thank you, Chairman Arch. And thank you, Mr. Hansen, for being back here. We have met several times over these years. You mentioned how many people are on the board and we know what your background is. What is the other makeup of the board? What kind of background do those people have?

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DAVID HANSEN: Yeah, that's a good question. I don't know that I can say for everybody, including I think there's a couple of board openings right now. But I mentioned, like I said, that the, the board president happens to be a medical social worker. There's a retired pediatrician. There's an individual with nursing background, just a, a variety of, of kinds of professions that contact families. So I think and I think that, that, that breadth is, is, is really valuable so even just like I said there, the, the medicine, including physician and nursing, social work, psychology, there have been, like I believe I-- there's often been one or more psychologists on the board. I think the position that I filled was probably by a psychologist. But so that's some of the breadth that I see. I feel like I'm missing some of the areas represented, but there is some breadth to the expertise.

WILLIAMS: Different backgrounds and different expertise.

DAVID HANSEN: Yeah, yeah.

WILLIAMS: With that, what do you see as, as your particular role in bringing to the board?

DAVID HANSEN: Yeah, so the, the-- it relates I think to the background. I think having background, a couple of things for me, I think help or that I can contribute. Of course, the psychology background, including clinical psychology background and direct experience, you know, with families who are dealing with, with a, a, a child, child maltreatment concerns, physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse. There's also I think the fact that I'm involved in a training program turns out to possibly be valuable. For instance, one of the, the things that we're least exploring, I don't know where this will go, but just as an example, I'm also part of another legislative initiative, a, a behavioral health education consortium of Nebraska that is coordinated out of UNMC that brings together all the behavioral health training programs in the state to kind of do coordination events, needs assessments, things like that. I think there's probably 16 or 18 programs involved, you know, master's and doctoral programs from again, throughout the state. Though, of course, in the rural areas, there aren't as many programs, but there's some. And-- but, but-- and the goal there is to address the shortage of behavioral health providers in the state. Right? So that's the-- that's right. And that's certainly clearly a, a need and concern.

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Well, that group and, and the Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Fund Board are having, are having an-- I, I assume it's best to pause when that happens, right? It's probably hard to hear me otherwise. OK. That, that group, Beacon, as it's called, and the Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Fund Board are going to have an initial meeting. It's in the-- we have it already in the books, it's early March, I believe, just to talk about, are there some ways where maybe the interests of the Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Fund Board might coincide with interests of Beacon in expanding availability of behavioral health services that are informed and quality services, evidence-based approaches for working with families who've experienced child abuse and neglect? So that was an example where my training expertise and contact with the universities and other universities might be relevant in addition to kind of the psychology expertise.

WILLIAMS: Well, thank you very much and thank you for your willingness to continue serving.

DAVID HANSEN: Yeah.

ARCH: Other questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. Thanks for coming today. Thanks for your testimony. Thank you for serving. Appreciate it very much.

DAVID HANSEN: Well, thank you. Thank you for your consideration. Let me know if you need anything and best wishes for all the efforts I know you have underway. I follow closely, as you might guess.

ARCH: Thank you.

DAVID HANSEN: Take care.

ARCH: Any proponents? Any opponents? Anybody want to testify in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, this will conclude our hearing for David Hansen's gubernatorial appointment, and will conclude our hearings for the morning.