

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Health and Human Services Committee March 23, 2026
Rough Draft

HARDIN: Welcome to the Health and Human Services Committee. I'm Senator Brian Hardin from District 48 and I serve as chair of the committee. The committee will go through an appointment today in the order posted, one in a row. So this public hearing today is your opportunity to be a part of the legislative process, express your position-- and then if you're planning to testify, which you won't because we don't have anyone here. And if you do not wish to testify, that part doesn't matter either, Barb, so we're just going to keep rolling through this. We will go through and, and listen to Dr. Brockhaus, as she shares with us from her background about this public hearing today. And I'm going to have the committee members who are here introduce themselves, starting with my far right and Senator Quick.

QUICK: All right. Dan Quick, District 35, Grand Island.

G. MEYER: Glen Meyer, District 17, Dakota, Thurston, Wayne, and the southern part of Dixon County.

FREDRICKSON: John Fredrickson, District 20.

HARDIN: Marvelous. And with that, we would love to hear from Dr. Makayla Brockhaus. How are you?

MAKAYLA BROCKHAUS: Hi, I'm doing good. Nice to meet you all.

HARDIN: Great. Where are you coming to us today from, Dr. Brockhaus?

MAKAYLA BROCKHAUS: Today, I am from-- in Omaha, at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. I'm on a rotation here currently, so I'm in a patient room right now utilizing that to speak with you all today.

HARDIN: Wonderful. This is about the Rural Health Advisory Committee, to which you are appointed. And we're just going to kind of listen to your story, if you don't mind. Share with us about your desire to be-- and serve on that committee, and then we'll follow up with some questions after you've done that. Does that sound okay?

MAKAYLA BROCKHAUS: Sounds great.

HARDIN: Awesome. Take it away.

MAKAYLA BROCKHAUS: So I'm from Creighton, Nebraska, which is a small town up in northeast Nebraska, born and raised there. And ever since I

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was younger, I knew I wanted to make an impact and help out in rural communities, whether that be Creighton or not, and decided I found a passion in healthcare. So I actually applied for the Rural Health Opportunities Program, the RHOP program, through Wayne State College, and was fortunate to get accepted to that. So I went to undergrad there and was automatically accepted into the University of Nebraska Medical Center, for medical school. Kept my options open during medical school, but ultimately, fell in love with the idea of serving rural communities, and especially with family medicine, all stages of life. So then, I fortunately got accepted into the-- what we call the Advanced Family Medicine Program, here at UNMC, for which I started my residency a year early, with commitment to go back to rural Nebraska to practice as a family physician. And that subspecialty, I'm going to have my 2 years-- final 2 years of training be in Kearney, Nebraska, so I get a good mix of academic, and then also, rural medicine, before I ultimately will graduate in 2028, and be able to actually go back to Creighton, Nebraska, to practice as a family medicine physician, so been full circle, and I'm very excited and I chose to be a part of this committee. Dr. Harrison, he's the dean here, and he chatted with me about it because he knows my passions for rural medicine and how much rural communities deserve extraordinary care. And so, I felt like this was a great opportunity for me to sit in, and also make sure that like-minded people are also thinking the same thing, and be a part of the government hearings for it, too.

HARDIN: Wonderful. Questions from the committee before we-- before I jump in and--

G. MEYER: I, I just have one question, Dr. Brockhaus. Brockhaus Funeral Homes, in that area.

MAKAYLA BROCKHAUS: Yeah.

G. MEYER: Are you related? You talked about full circle. Is this a full-service, full-service facility?

MAKAYLA BROCKHAUS: This is, this is-- yes, my dad is Greg Brockhaus and my uncle is Joe Brockhaus. And actually, both of my brothers are both funeral directors as well, so I kind of took the different path in life, but yeah. That's quite-- we are quite a full-circle family, for sure.

G. MEYER: You are the other-- on the other end of the family business. I appreciate that. Thank you, Doctor.

MAKAYLA BROCKHAUS: That's right. That's right. Yes.

HARDIN: What do you see as the challenges for rural Nebraska, as you look at being a part of this committee? What kind of challenges would you like to bring to that committee and say, look, we need to deal with-- blank. What goes in that blank?

MAKAYLA BROCKHAUS: Yeah. I think, especially-- you know, I have the unique opportunity to be with physicians in training. And I think, you know, what I've always seen is that living in rural communities is not for everybody. You know, people have to live by a Walmart, a Target, things like that. So just really drawing in those people who are committed to not only living in rural communities, but serving them as well. So I think, you know, whether that be through incentives or-- also, like people like myself like sharing the, the benefit of serving rural communities and-- or having like community members also kind of share what rural medicine means to them and having a physician. I know in Creighton, like we didn't have an actual like, practicing physician at the hospital for several years, and that impacted our rural community significantly. So it's always been a big passion of mine, for sure.

HARDIN: How many beds, roughly, are in that community hospital?

MAKAYLA BROCKHAUS: Yeah. There's about 6 beds in there. I think at least 2 or 3 of them are swing, so for like skilled nursing, facility like rehab-- so about 6 beds.

HARDIN: OK. When you are with students at the university setting, what do you share with them that they might find attractive? I would agree with you. If you're from a rural area, you're much more likely to go back. What kind of things do you highlight that would make them go, you know what, I really should consider going back to a rural area and serving. What's that sound like for you?

MAKAYLA BROCKHAUS: Yeah. I would say some benefits of going back to a rural community is, you know, you get that widespread of just variety, in general, which a lot of, I think, students find appealing. But also, just-- I feel like there's so much respect by the community members, because you are highly looked upon to serve them. And I feel they just-- the respect that rural community members have for not only physicians, but like lawyers and other people higher up in the community is something that is really beautiful. And I feel like we're appreciated, where sometimes in the, in the bigger cities, you know, a

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physician here is just a-- kind of a tool and a number, and I feel like there's just more personal in the rural communities. And people actually, you know, take time and listen to your recommendations, and I feel like your care then matters even more.

HARDIN: Thank you. Other questions? Seeing none, we really appreciate your time, Dr. Brockhaus.

MAKAYLA BROCKHAUS: Yes. Thank you so much. I really appreciate your time.

HARDIN: Wonderful. Thanks so much for the privilege. And this wraps up our hearing--

MAKAYLA BROCKHAUS: Thank you.

HARDIN: --for the Nebraska Rural Health Advisory Commission with Dr. Makayla Brockhaus. And this concludes our hearings for the day. Thank you, everyone.