

add that we need to maintain services across the State of Nebraska. We must keep those people that are being educated to provide those professional kinds of services that are provided in nursing so that they stay in the areas where they have graduated from and provide that service to the communities that are in the rural areas of Nebraska. As communities continue to deteriorate and we have the increasing elderly population that continues to grow, we must ensure that we have those people out there that can serve those folks. So I would just simply ask you to also support the amendment. Thank you.

SENATOR CARSTEN: Thank you. Senator Scofield, please, on the Nichol amendment.

SENATOR SCOFIELD: Members of the Legislature, I don't think I can add to the case that has been made here. Obviously, coming from the western part of the state and being aware of our needs out there, I, too, support this proposal. I would like to make a point here though about the difficult decisions that all of higher education faces and particularly the regents and as Senator Warner has so ably pointed out, this is a new program. It will create some pressure in an institution that needs to make, in my opinion, some very difficult decisions and needs to reallocate some resources to the total state which I think is what Senator Smith was also alluding to. But I think this is a justifiable expense. It's critical to deal with rural health care needs and the statistics clearly indicate the need for this kind of program, the situation that will inevitably occur if we don't plan ahead for those needs and particularly looking at the kind of aging population that we have, I think this is an appropriate program to begin and, in fact, is essential for continued adequate rural health care not only in hospital settings, but nursing homes and other settings as well. So I would appreciate your support for this amendment. Thank you.

SENATOR CARSTEN: Thank you. Senator Nichol, would you like to close on your amendment, please?

SPEAKER NICHOL: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, yes, just very briefly. I didn't intend to take this from any other program. I don't want to take it from any other program where it would be applicable, but I've always supported education and supported nurses education and I think this is an important section of our education and that is a nursing program. Senator Warner admits that it has merit, and if it didn't have merit, if I didn't think it had merit, I certainly wouldn't be up here