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To: Committee on Prescribing Psychologist Permit

This letter is in response to a request for information on psychiatric shortage areas in Nebraska. The notation should be made that this letter is based on professional and personal experience and that I am not representing the Rural Health Advisory Commission in any manner.

I am a licensed psychologist from Curtis, Nebraska. I have been an active member of the Rural Health Advisory Commission since 2003, and serve as the mental health representative. I am presently vice-chair of this governor appointed group and in the past I have served as chair. One of the main purposes of this commission is to recruit and retain medical and behavioral professionals to rural, underserved shortage areas in Nebraska.

Serving on this commission for the past twelve years has given me a fairly good understanding of the health shortage areas that exist and that have existed in our state for many years. In addition, I have served as a rural practitioner in shortage areas since 1989.

There continues to be a strong need for mental health professionals in our state. Almost all counties in Nebraska are in need of mental health workers – especially psychiatrists. The mental health shortage maps provided by state and federal offices show a continuing need for psychiatrists in rural areas. The maps are based on number of psychiatrists licensed in each county and clearly show almost all counties in Nebraska as being shortage areas. These maps are updated annually and the 2014 Health Shortage Map for Mental Health clearly shows the need throughout the state. It has been my experience that psychiatric shortage maps have changed very little over the years and that it is unlikely they will change in the near future. There has been a constant, continuing need for further psychiatric practitioners in these underserved areas.

I hope this information answers your questions.

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