



## RURAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMISSION

NEBRASKA OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH  
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### **DRAFT** MINUTES of the

#### **Rural Health Advisory Commission (RHAC)**

**Friday February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025  
1:30 p.m. – 3:18 p.m.  
Nebraska State Office Building  
Lower Level Goldenrod Conference Room  
301 Centennial Mall South  
Lincoln, Nebraska**

- or -

**Virtual Via Webex**

#### **1. Call Meeting to Order; Open Meetings Act and Agenda Posted/Available for Download; Adopt Agenda; Approve Minutes from November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Meeting**

Chairman Marty Fattig called the quarterly meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. with the following members present: April Dexter, N.P.; Marty Fattig; Jeffrey Harrison, M.D.; Kate Hesser, M.D.; Thomas Janousek, PsyD; Kate Kusek, D.D.S.; Myra Stoney; Timothy Tesmer, M.D.; Roger Wells, PA-C; Diva Wilson, M.D.

Mr. Fattig announced that the meeting notice had been posted to the DHHS website and sent out via email and USPS on February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025.\* Handouts and meeting agenda were also posted on the DHHS website, with a link to these given on the agenda itself (<http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Rural-Health-Advisory-Commission.aspx> - under "Documents"). Additionally, the Open Meetings Act and meeting agenda were posted outside the meeting room.

Roger Wells, PA-C moved to approve the February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025, meeting agenda and Kate Kusek, D.D.S. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Janousek, Kusek, Stoney, Tesmer, Wells, Wilson. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hunt, Schroeder. Motion carried.

Kate Kusek, D.D.S. moved to approve the November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024, meeting minutes, and Jeffrey Harrison, M.D. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Kusek, Stoney, Tesmer, Wells. ABSTAIN: Janousek, Wilson. EXCUSED: Hunt, Schroeder. Motion carried.

#### **2. Administrative Items**

*Accountability and Disclosure Forms due March 2<sup>nd</sup>*

Kate Hesser, M.D. and Diva Wilson, M.D. need to submit their forms.

*\*Sent as usual to: NE Rural Hospital CEOs, NE Certified Rural Health Clinic Directors, NE Local Public Health Departments, NE Community Action Partners, NE Community Health Centers/FQHCs, NE Professional Associations/ Organizations, NE State Senators, the Offices of the Governor and Lt. Governor, and other rural interested parties and groups.*

### *Student Loans Form 1098s*

These have been processed per Deb Stoltenberg.

### *Commission Member Update*

Three residents have applied for the vacant spot; one will be appointed by Governor Pillen.

Dr. Thomas Janousek, the DHHS representative (Behavioral Health) and Dr. Diva Wilson, the Creighton Medical School representative, were present and everyone welcomed the new members.

### *Other Announcements*

Marty Fattig will complete his 7th term as a Commission member at the end of this year and won't be reapplying as Rural Hospital Administrator representative. He'll be contacting the Nebraska Hospital Association to see if they have recommendations for a replacement. Heidi Peirce thanked him for his service and responsiveness over the years and other members echoed this.

## **3. Office of Rural Health Update**

Heidi Peirce then gave an update on the Office of Rural Health (ORH) activities. There are six federal grants that fund ORH and we are working on grant reports for State Office of Rural Health grant and Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility program (SORH/FLEX).

Ms. Peirce is still working on some Maternity projects that should be finished up by the end of March. These included a three-part Maternal Medical Home webinar (open to Nurses, Nurse Managers, Maternity personnel), and working with GIS on Maternity maps based on the data received back from Health Professions Tracking Service. She will present this to the RHAC this summer.

General discussion of maternal deserts. Kate Hesser, M.D. asked if we fund certified nurse midwives. The federally funded State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) can. These providers are currently focused around major metropolitan areas.

Ms. Peirce went on to explain that the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) is currently updating their demographic data after a hiatus occurring for quite a long time during COVID pandemic. In November, the data renewed itself from 2018 to 2022; this year there will be an update from 2022-23. Updates should be more regular now that COVID is over. They didn't want their shortage designations to change much during COVID – too much other stuff to worry about. This demographic data is used to determine HPSA Scores and other shortage designations.

She remarked that we are patiently waiting for the Notice of Funding for the SLRP grant and will be applying for new funding to start in September of this year.

ORH continues to work with NeRHA on projects to promote rural health, including additional marketing activities, and will again fund part of the Rural Health Conference in June.

She stated that our plan is to visit more locations throughout the state this spring and summer. If members have any input on locations that we should stop at, we are open to your suggestions.

Additionally, ORH is working on the tri-annual update of state shortage areas. Will have something to look at by June and RHAC will vote to approve.

Finally, ORH has a new Primary Care Office Director starting the second week of March.

## **4. Rural Health Systems and Professional Incentive Act Program Updates**

### *Shortage Area Requests*

Boyd County requested re-assessment as a shortage area for Family Medicine. Upon review by ORH (verified by HPTS), they do qualify.

Myra Stoney moved to approve the designation of Boyd County as a shortage area for Family Medicine and Kate Kusek, D.D.S. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Janousek, Kusek, Stoney, Tesmer, Wells, Wilson. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hunt, Schroeder. Motion carried.

Adams County requested re-assessment as a shortage area for General Surgery. Upon review by ORH (verified by HPTS), they do qualify.

Kate Kusek, D.D.S. moved to approve the designation of Adams County as a shortage area for General Surgery and Roger Wells, PA-C seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Janousek, Kusek, Stoney, Tesmer, Wells, Wilson. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hunt, Schroeder. Motion carried.

York County requested re-assessment as a shortage area for Family Medicine. Upon review by ORH (verified by HPTS), they do not quite qualify.

#### *Budget Update*

Fiscal Year 2024-25; July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025 – second year of new biennium:

Total allocation = \$2,180,723+\$220,000 carryover  
\$2,399,795.16

General Funds Obligated FY24-25 (total):  
\$2,004,625.39

General Funds Remaining for FY24-25:  
\$395,169.77 (cannot be carried over)

LB 261 proposes cutting the current general fund allocation from \$2,180,723 to \$680,723. If this goes through as proposed, existing contracts will not be able to be funded next fiscal year. There will be a shortfall of \$550,000 just looking at current contracts, or \$735,000 if fourteen new applicants are approved to start in April (which current fiscal year funding would allow). Some cash funds are available to make up for the shortfall, but only about \$75,000, and these funds do not replenish. Once they are spent, they are gone. New applicants would be looking at start dates in July 2026 or July 2027.

Marty Fattig read from testimony he'd shared as a private citizen (re: LB 261) that discussed economic impact. From 1994-2020, the program funded \$16 million in loan repayment – that generated over \$1 billion in economic impact, an 80:1 return on investment. The Governor is looking at every dollar he can to reduce property taxes. Must make case of how much good can be made with 1.5 million.

RHAC members discussed that they've never had to cancel contracts before. Between that and not being able to fund new folks for up to two years (14 folks would go on a waitlist immediately), trust in the program would be greatly impacted if this budget change goes through.

Kate Hesser, M.D. asked when we will know what the final budget is. May was mentioned as a possibility. April Dexter asked if it would be beneficial to email senators about this bill. Marty Fattig said yes.

Marty Fattig asked if folks would like to see his testimony. There was general interest. Rachael Wolfe will send the testimony to RHAC members.

Roger Wells moved to have Marty Fattig represent the Rural Health Advisory Commission and demonstrate the benefits of funding these activities to the State Legislature and Myra Stoney seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Hesser, Kusek, Stoney, Wells. ABSTAIN: Janousek, Tesmer, Wilson. EXCUSED: Harrison, Hunt, Schroeder. Motion carried.

#### *LB 27; LB 312; LB 553*

LB 27 would establish a loan repayment program for new dentists who serve Medicaid patients (percentage to be determined by the commission) and would pay up to \$300,000 over five years without requiring match or rural practice.

Funding specific to this program is suggested to come from the Medicaid Managed Care Excess Profit Fund (\$1.5 million).

LB 312 would add nurse anesthetists to the program, and LB 553 would add dietitian nutritionists to the program (Hearing on February 28th). No additional funding has been proposed. A proposed funding cut of \$1.5 million general funds has been proposed.

Regarding LB 27 – Kate Kusek, D.D.S. visited with NE Dental Association; they were not aware that there was funding being allocated for this and taken from the program at the same time – NE Dental Association is advocating for funding to remain the same in addition to adding funding for the new program. NE Dental Association is trying to get more dentists who accept Medicaid in the State of Nebraska in general, specifically in rural areas. RHAC would determine the percent of Medicaid patients that qualify. Would need to work with DHHS to see what metrics we can track, what info we have access to, and what “enough” looks like. Would need to bring a few different people to the table to look at those guidelines. Goal is to do something to address Medicaid /dental care access issue in NE. She would rather they just fund Medicaid better.

Marty Fattig remarked that adding these other provider types makes sense, but it needs to be funded, and for nutritionists, we need a lot more information.

#### **5. Review Current Federal and State Legislative Activities Impacting Rural Health**

Roger Wells, PA-C attended the National Rural Health Association meeting and spoke about his experiences there. There is talk about thinking outside of the box to recruit and retain providers; 35% of all providers go into primary care, but within 5 years, it drops to 15%. See map handout for hospitals at risk of closure, and pdf report for a summary of issues.

Marty Fattig remarked that the Nebraska Hospital Association is sponsoring some important bills tackling 340B and prior authorization, a big committee is working on EMS, and there is a bill to address Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs). On the Federal and State level, they are looking for money everywhere. Mr. Wells remarked that 17% of folks in Nebraska are on Medicaid. They're looking at cutting Medicaid to only treat specific things related to social determinants of health.

Thomas Janousek, PsyD spoke about some recent efforts by the Division of Behavioral Health (DBH), including an integrated clinic program in rural areas of the state that is making progress. There is one location in Auburn where every available slot is full.

DBH also put out a same-day access website for mental health care (access by region) - [Dhhs.ne.gov/sameday](http://Dhhs.ne.gov/sameday)

Finally, they continue to publicize their 988 program – a crisis line that anyone can call – the public or providers can use the hotline. Kate Kusek, D.D.S. asked if law enforcement should be informed about this and Dr. Janousek said yes, to spread the word and keep spreading the word.

#### **6. Public Comment**

None.

#### **7. CLOSED SESSION**

Kate Hesser, M.D. moved to go to Closed Session for the purpose of review and discussion of accounts receivable, loan repayment program applications, and other confidential information, and for the prevention of needless injury to the reputation of the individuals. Roger Wells, PA-C seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Janousek, Kusek, Stoney, Tesmer, Wells, Wilson. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hunt, Schroeder. Motion carried.

Chairman Marty Fattig announced that the Commission would go into Closed Session at 2:55 p.m.

*It was announced that guests should leave the room and the Webex.*

## 8. OPEN SESSION

The Commission returned to Open Session at 3:15pm

Kate Hesser, M.D. moved to provisionally approve the loan repayment applications with estimated loan repayment start dates and loan repayment amounts as indicated or as determined by Office of Rural Health staff, pending appropriation of funds and based on issuance of license and/or loan documentation, practice time in the shortage area, and the availability of funds for the state match, and also to approve action discussed during the accounts receivable portion. Kate Kusek, D.D.S. seconded the motion. Deb Stoltenberg initiated roll call vote. YES: Dexter, Fattig, Harrison, Hesser, Janousek, Kusek, Stoney, Tesmer, Wells, Wilson. ABSTAIN: None. EXCUSED: Hunt, Schroeder. Motion carried.

Date application submitted	First Name:	Last Name:	Profession/Specialty:	License Number OR Date you will be licensed:	Name of Facility:	County:	Average hours per week TOTAL:	Average ER hours per week:	Practice Start Date	Loan Balance	Local Match	State Start Date:	State Award Amount:	SLRP Start Date:	SLRP Minimum Award Amount:	SLRP Maximum Award Amount:
11/25/2024	Andrew	Olvera	Physician Assistant, Family Practice	3043	OneWorld Community Health Center	Douglas	40	0	3/6/2024	\$ 138,195.07	\$ 15,000.00	4/1/2025	\$ 90,000.00	9/1/2025	\$ 50,000.00	\$100,000.00
11/25/2024	Christina	Holbrooks	MD/DO, Family Practice	36511	Box Butte General Hospital	Box Butte	40	0	10/2/2024	\$ 302,770.00	\$ 30,000.00	4/1/2025	\$180,000.00			
11/26/2024	Amy	Sjoholm	Licensed Mental Health Professional	1882	Acme Behavioral Health PC	Adams	40	0	1/6/2025	\$ 85,087.64	\$ 15,000.00	4/1/2025	\$ 85,087.64			
12/4/2024	Ashley	Strain	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	115627	Midtown Health Center	Madison	40	0	11/5/2024	\$ 114,513.00	\$ 15,000.00	4/1/2025	\$ 90,000.00	9/1/2025	\$ 50,000.00	\$100,000.00
12/6/2024	Daniel	Aranda-Fregoso	Physician Assistant, Family Practice	MA8426834	OneWorld Community Health Center	Douglas	40	0	11/8/2023	\$ 148,930.79	\$ 15,000.00	4/1/2025	\$ 90,000.00	9/1/2025	\$ 50,000.00	\$100,000.00
12/30/2024	Tessa	Welniak	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	115413	VCHS Medical Clinic	Valley	32	8	6/19/2024	\$ 50,965.50	\$ 15,000.00	4/1/2025	\$ 50,965.50	9/1/2025	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 50,965.50
12/30/2024	Riley	Butler	Physician Assistant, Family Practice	3108	Brodstone Family Medical Center - Edgar	Clay	40	0	2/26/2024	\$ 217,140.26	\$ 15,000.00	4/1/2025	\$ 90,000.00	9/1/2025	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 80,000.00
12/30/2024	Talya	Shutt	Registered Nurse (Bachelor's level or higher)	60866	West Holt Medical Services	Holt	20	0	3/10/2007	\$ 18,042.41	\$ 12,500.00			1/1/2025	\$ 18,042.40	\$ -
1/2/2025	Nick	Maddox	Physician Assistant, General Surgery	2/3/2025	Great Plains Health	Lincoln	40	0	3/3/2025	\$ 152,026.52	\$ 5,250.00	4/1/2025	\$ 31,500.00			
1/2/2025	Caitlynn	Peterson	Occupational Therapist	2963	Great Plains Health	Lincoln	40	0	10/14/2024	\$ 225,962.30	\$ 5,250.00	4/1/2025	\$ 31,500.00			
1/2/2025	Danielle	Nordby	Nurse Practitioner, Psychiatry	10/1/2025	Lanning Center	Adams	40	0	10/1/2024	\$ 47,915.94	\$ 10,000.00	10/1/2025	\$ 47,915.94			
1/3/2025	Kirstyn	Evans	Registered Nurse (Bachelor's level or higher)	5/30/2025	Antelope Memorial Hospital	Antelope	36	0	7/1/2025	\$ 19,416.00	\$ 12,500.00			9/1/2025	\$ 19,416.00	\$ -
1/6/2025	Bridgette	Pudwill	MD/DO, Family Practice	27667	Boone County Health Center	Boone	40	10	11/3/2015	\$ 187,419.20		4/1/2025	\$ -	9/1/2025	\$ 75,000.00	\$150,000.00
1/7/2025	Kenady	Osborne	Registered Nurse (Bachelor's level or higher)	89180	West Holt Memorial Hospital/Specialty Clinic/Surgery Midwest	Holt	36	0	8/2/2021	\$ 9,568.06	\$ 12,500.00			1/1/2025	\$ 9,568.06	\$ -
1/13/2025	Shelbi	Oberhauser	Licensed Mental Health Professional	8/5/2025	Encouragement and Counseling Center	Buffalo	40	0	6/19/2024	\$ 72,845.99	\$ -	4/1/2025	\$ -	9/1/2025	\$ -	\$ -
1/16/2025	Sara	Hoffschneider	MD/DO, Family Practice	35890	Cherry County Hospital	Cherry	40	5	9/9/2024	\$ 95,888.92	\$ 30,000.00	4/1/2025	\$ 95,888.88	9/1/2025	\$ 95,888.80	\$ -
1/22/2025	Casey	Reihe	MD/DO, Psychiatry	6/30/2026	Columbus Community Hospital	Platte	40	0	7/1/2026	\$ 190,557.18	\$ 30,000.00	7/1/2026	\$180,000.00	9/1/2026	\$120,000.00	\$190,557.18
1/31/2025	Kurtis	Hoefling	Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice	113047	Providence Medical Center	Wayne	46	30	1/1/2025	\$ 91,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	4/1/2025	\$ 60,000.00			
2/4/2025	Kevin	Amthor	MD/DO, Family Practice	7/1/2025	Phelps Medical Group	Phelps	40	8	9/2/2025	\$ 352,863.51	\$ 30,000.00	7/1/2025	\$180,000.00	9/1/2025	\$120,000.00	\$240,000.00

Note: If award amount is blank for a particular program, provider does not qualify for that program. If \$0 is listed, funds for that program were already obligated and provider will be added to a waitlist to allow time for them to find a match or to potentially be funded in the case of another provider's withdrawal.

## 9. Adjourn

The Commission adjourned at 3:18 p.m.