


**TO:** Senator Tim Gay, Chair  
Members of the Health and Human Services Committee

**FROM:** Bruce R. Rieker, Vice President, Advocacy 

**DATE:** February 24, 2010

**SUBJECT:** LB 953 – Provide a rate of payment for certain medical services to county inmates and those in emergency protective custody situations

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On behalf of our 85 member hospitals in Nebraska and the more than 42,000 people they employ, the Nebraska Hospital Association (NHA) has a **neutral position on LB 953**.

LB 953 addresses a vital issue to the state by proposing to require that counties pay the Medicaid rate for the provision of medical services to county inmates and those in emergency protective custody (EPC). However, with respect to EPCs, the issue is much larger and the NHA recommends that the legislature conduct a thorough examination of EPC issues in Nebraska and identify challenges occurring within the behavioral health care services sector in order to properly address this situation.

The current status in Nebraska with respect to EPC is critical. Hospitals are inundated with individuals seeking psychiatric and health care as a result of inadequate community resources, reduction in insurance coverage, and other structural issues resulting from a wide variety of causes. Local, county, and state law enforcement officers have difficulty accessing crisis beds in the hospitals contracted with behavioral health regions for EPC care. Health care providers experience difficulty when seeking reimbursement for services.

In order to create an efficient system that is responsive to all parties; including, but not limited to: consumers, counties and providers, Nebraska must develop an effective statewide strategic plan. Regional disparities must be eliminated. Uniform roles and responsibilities should be established. The state's strategic plan would not only have to provide financial parity for providers and law enforcement agencies but also address the issues of remote Nebraska regions crossing county or state borders to access behavioral health facilities and services. The plan should also address and implement some methodology for single point of contact for service delivery, bed availability, entry into the system and reimbursement.

Nebraska's hospitals appreciate the intent of LB 953; however, they urge the legislature to conduct a comprehensive study that examines the myriad of issues related to this matter before moving forward with this proposal. Thank you for your consideration of the NHA's perspective on this important matter.