



A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING THAT AN APPROPRIATE INTERIM COMMITTEE STUDY CHILDHOOD HUNGER IN MONTANA AND WAYS TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO NUTRITIOUS FOOD FOR ALL MONTANA CHILDREN.

WHEREAS, more than 92,000 Montana children experience hunger and lack access to nutritious foods at various times each week and month; and

WHEREAS, the Montana Food Bank Network has seen children's visits for emergency food increase from 113,768 children during a 6-month period in 2009 to 165,443 children during the same 6-month period in 2010; and

WHEREAS, U.S. census figures show that poverty in Montana has increased from 14.8% in 2008 to 15.1% in 2009; and

WHEREAS, a family of four at the federal poverty level earns \$1,838 a month and typically spends most of that amount on rent, child care, utilities, transportation, and medical expenses, meaning many families have little or no money for food; and

WHEREAS, research shows that a chronic lack of good nutrition results in a significantly increased risk of obesity, health problems, and behavioral and social problems and in the potential for decreased academic achievement, including an inability to complete a high school education; and

WHEREAS, children with poor health and academic outcomes during their school years have a lower chance of achieving good health and self-sufficiency as adults, creating greater potential for future dependency on public assistance programs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, to study the degree to which Montana children lack access to adequate nutritious food and to make recommendations on ways to alleviate childhood hunger and improve access to nutritious foods for

children throughout Montana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the study examine and make recommendations on:

(1) existing state, federal, local, and private programs that seek to reduce childhood hunger and improve children's access to nutritious foods, including but not limited to programs based in child-care facilities and schools;

(2) closing gaps that exist in the services offered by existing programs and reducing the barriers that exist to providing services to children throughout the state;

(3) ways in which communities and community organizations, including faith-based groups, could work together to:

(a) identify gaps in services;

(b) create a central clearinghouse for program information;

(c) share their expertise in areas such as nutrition education for children, growing one's own food, and basic food preparation skills; and

(d) expand successful programs into new communities;

(4) ways to encourage the use of Montana farm products in schools and other facilities and programs in which children are the primary users;

(5) policy changes needed at the state or federal level to increase participation in and improve on existing programs, including a review of existing tax policies and changes to those policies that may alleviate childhood hunger;

(6) the strategic use of public funds in order to produce efficiencies and create a strong case for public and private investments, including ways the state, communities, and faith-based groups could most efficiently raise awareness about childhood hunger through coordinated communications campaigns that target specific audiences, identify specific needs, and promote concrete solutions; and

(7) ways to measure the progress that existing or proposed efforts are making toward the goal of ending childhood hunger.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the committee request participation in the study by the Department of Public Health and Human Services, the Office of Public Instruction, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Labor and Industry, the Department of Commerce, local school districts, community programs offering food assistance to low-income children, tribal representatives, private organizations, faith-based groups,

and other organizations as appropriate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2012.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions, comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 63rd Legislature.

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