



## MISSION MOUNTAIN MARKET

**Food Processing and Cooperative Development Center**  
A project of Lake County Community Development Corporation 501(C)(3)

EXHIBIT 10  
DATE 2/8/05  
HB 484

Mr. Chairman & members of the committee,

My name is Jan Tusick and I represent the Mission Mountain Ag Enterprise & Cooperative Development Center. I am here to testify in support of HB 484, a bill that enables the inspection and licensing of a Mobile Slaughter Unit in the state of Montana. My work with agricultural producers in the development of value added products has brought to my attention that there is need for additional infrastructure Montana for the slaughter and processing of livestock and poultry. As we explored this further and examined models in other areas, such as the Lopez Island Growers Cooperative in Washington State ( who operate a USDA inspected Mobile Slaughter Unit), it became evident that there are opportunities in Mobile Slaughtering that at this time are not available in Montana. Further research discovered that there are barriers to allowing this to happen in the state and I believe we should be removing such barriers and opening opportunities for Montana producers to add value to their agricultural products so they may enter new markets. HB 484 strictly removes ~~one barrier~~ - which was the lack of recognition by the state of Montana to license and inspect Mobile ~~Processing~~ <sup>Slaughter</sup> Units. HB 484 will open an avenue for economic opportunities by allowing the development of an essential tool for Montana Producers to enter the retail and wholesale marketplace in Montana with the state inspection of their value added meat products. HB 484 will not alter or lower existing regulations or standards nor does the intent of the bill effect existing exemptions such as statute 81-9-218 which defines custom exemption in the Montana Code Annotated.

A Mobile Slaughter Unit will offer:

- An alternative to producers who are isolated from processing centers and who cooperatively can pool their harvest with other producers therefore lowering costs in transportation and offal disposal
- Can provide a low stress environment for the harvest of stock, especially Bison, which can minimize the event of "dark cutters or in the case of pork- watery, pale meat.
- Offers a unique opportunity to poultry producers, who under the a USDA exemption, can process up to 20,000 birds with state inspection and enter a growing marketplace for free range birds
- Enables a producer to maintain source identity and preserve production practices, such as natural and organic, by overseeing the harvest of their livestock through a separation of slaughter and storage which can insure carcass contamination does not occur.

Several concerns have been raised by this bill. The largest is the concern that Custom Exempt Processors, who already use mobile units, would be mandated to be inspected as if they were a state inspected facility. Again it is not the intent of this bill to change or alter statute 81-9-218, the exemption of Custom Processing, nor is it the intent of this bill to alter the USDA FSIS statute 381.10, the poultry exemption of the slaughter of 20,000 birds or less.

The intent of this bill is to open opportunities for Montana Producers to new markets by removing an existing barrier that prevents Montana producers from developing and using Mobile Slaughter Units that can be licensed and inspected by the state of Montana.

Thank you for your time and consideration

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