



EXHIBIT 1  
DATE 2-9-05  
HB 550

## Montana Youth Leadership Forum

www.montanaylf.org

### Youth with Disabilities Facts

- 5,432 Montana High School Students are in special education.
- Employment for youth with disabilities remains low with people with disabilities having an unemployment rate of 70-75%.
- Due to low self-esteem youth, with disabilities have a higher drug and alcohol abuse rate.
- Youth with disabilities have one of the highest dropout rates in Montana
- Traditional leadership training programs such as Boys' State and Girls' State are not available nor accessible to youth with disabilities.

### Funds for the Montana Youth Leadership Forum HB550

*Mission - To identify students with disabilities who have exhibited leadership skills and to equip them with additional training so they may become leaders by example.*

Youth Leadership Forum's (YLF's) are a national initiative with twenty-six states participating. The curriculum for the program comes from California. In 2000 Montana held its first Youth Leadership Forum, and over the past five years dozens of high school students with disabilities have completed the program. The Youth Leadership Forum has been held on the campus of MSU-Billings, and funds have been provided through a variety of donations and grants.

Each state has developed different approaches to the funding of their Youth Leadership Forum, and some states have been unable to secure funding and have had to discontinue their Forum. We are working to have a public-private partnership in the funding of this program.

#### Montana Youth Leadership Forum statistics

- Seventy-five youth from across Montana have completed the program
- Retention rates of those who have completed the program is 97%
- 16 have gone on to college
- 13 Alumni are employed
- 32 Alumni are still in high school

Alumni have gone on to serve on the President's Council on Employment of People with Disabilities, serve as a Congressional Intern, speak at state and national conferences about the program, and build a network of peer support for each other.

***Please support youth with disabilities for they are our future.***