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EXHIBIT 4  
DATE 2-18-05  
HB 369

February 17, 2005

Montana House of Representatives Appropriations Committee  
State Capitol  
Helena, MT 59620

VIA FACSIMILE

Honorable Members of the Montana House of Representatives, Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for the invitation to provide testimony in support of Montana's House Bill 369. While it was my hope to personally address the honorable members of your state's 59<sup>th</sup> legislature at the hearing scheduled for Friday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, a previous commitment involving education policy will unfortunately prevent me attending.

In lieu of my physical presence, please accept the following written testimony which is an account of the experience of statewide ACT testing in Colorado. As Governor Bill Owens' chief education policy advisor, it was my charge to lead the education reform initiative along with statewide adoption and implementation of the ACT for all 11<sup>th</sup> graders. The State is now entering the fifth year of the ACT testing program and the results have been truly remarkable, dubbing it "The Home Run." More students are enrolling in college and the message about preparation in high school has added meaning for students, for parents, and for educators. The data collected has provided the basis for continuous student improvement and, from a fiscal standpoint, the benefits of the ACT far outweigh the overall taxpayer expenditure - it is viewed as a successful investment.

I hope that my testimony will help to inform and inspire your legislative body to fully consider adoption of the ACT for your Montana's 11<sup>th</sup> graders. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute a first-hand policy perspective. Please don't hesitate to contact me for additional information through the deliberation process. Colorado stands ready to provide supportive information for implementation upon passage of HB 369.

Sincerely,

Terri Rayburn Davis  
Vice President, The Fund For Colorado's Future

Investing  
in our  
civic  
life...

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**ACT Testimony**  
**59<sup>th</sup> Montana State Legislature**  
**Thursday, February 17, 2005**  
**Presented on this date by Terri Rayburn Davis**

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To the Honorable Members of the State of Montana's 59th Legislature:

My name is Terri Rayburn Davis, and it is my pleasure to provide information regarding Colorado's adoption of the ACT Assessment for all students in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. I hope this will provide you some background and insight into the statewide experience of an ACT test.

Before I begin, I would like to briefly share my professional experience. In 1999, I was Governor Bill Owens' Senior Policy Advisor and responsible for the implementation of the statewide ACT exam for 11<sup>th</sup> grade students as well as his education reform initiative. During that time it was my responsibility to ensure the successful implementation for testing which began in the 2000-2001 academic year. More recently, I served for two years as the Deputy Assistant Secretary in Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs at the US Department of Education. Currently, I am the Vice President of The Fund For Colorado's Future, a not-for-profit organization based in Denver and established by Governor Owens to raise achievement of all students in the state.

As Colorado looked at an assessment system that would measure students from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade through 11<sup>h</sup> grade in reading, writing and math, it struggled with finding a comprehensive way to measure a student's overall academic growth and preparedness for post-secondary enrollment. Governor Owens was concerned after talking with parents, students and teachers that students in high school would not take the 11<sup>th</sup> grade test seriously and that the assessment which we chose would align with our Colorado state standards.

We found after researching these issues that over 60% of our college-bound high school graduates were participating in the ACT Assessment which was administered after school and on weekends, at a cost to parents of approximately \$26 (now \$28.) The ACT is a content-based test and the Colorado Department of Education had already researched and found that the test was aligned with our state standards. We also discovered that the students who were not taking the test were those from low-income schools and diverse backgrounds who could not afford the test nor did they think that they had the ability to attend college.

In the 2000-2001 academic school year, Colorado began implementation of the statewide test for all 11<sup>th</sup> graders who could use their scores to apply to any college in the nation.

The critics said:

- The students would not take the test seriously
- The statewide test average would go down significantly with all students participating and therefore hurt those students who were going to college
- The teachers could not administrator the test without security issues and uniformity
- The ACT test was not aligned with Colorado standards
- That not all students should be considered "college material"

In reality, the first year of implementation could not have gone better:

- Teachers and counselors were trained to administer the test and very few errors were reported
- Parents were supportive of the ACT test and made an effort to ensure their students were in school for the test day
- Students did take the test seriously because they understood its importance in providing options for their future
- Students' ACT test scores were accepted at colleges across the country
- Minority students tested increased a dramatic 94% the first year. Their scores showed many were ready for college - and subsequently, enrolled

The first year, the results could not have been better:

- Colorado had a 99.2% participation rate and continues to enjoy similar annual participation rates of over 99%.
- The year prior to statewide junior testing, the average composite score of Colorado's 2001 self-selected college-bound graduates was 21.5. The inaugural year of all-tested juniors recorded a composite score of 19.6. This shows scores did not, in fact, drop significantly even with nearly 100% participation.
- Both students and parents were motivated to take the test seriously because their test score did impact college admission decisions. (Students can choose to use the scores or they can take the test again at their own expense.)
- Students who released scores were included in the recruitment and scholarship pipeline.
- The Governor felt strongly that we, as a state, needed to provide access and the opportunity for all students to have the ability and information needed to apply to college.
- The ACT scores could open the door to minority students and low-income students who had never had the opportunity or money to take the test before.

After four consecutive years of testing, the data now consistently shows:

- Combined increases from 2001-2003 across the state's 2 and 4-year college campuses is up by 34.4%
- More students are attending colleges and universities who were not previously identified as "college-bound" - the first year alone registered an increase of 12%
- More minorities are attending college than ever before
- 7% increase in college enrollment for students with family incomes of less than \$42,000
- 6,214 more high school graduates scoring 19 or higher on math
- College readiness has increased each year with 59% demonstrating proficiency with an ACT score of 19 or more, signaling readiness for freshman-level coursework

In closing, I previously stated that I worked at the USDE and had the opportunity to observe states struggling with the issue of determining whether students have the skills and the knowledge to be successful in post-secondary education. I believe Colorado has been able to provide parents, students and the community with an assessment that tells us just that without a high stakes exit exam, instead creating a test that students take seriously and that finally aligns with our standards.

Thank You.

Terri Rayburn Davis