

EXHIBIT 4

DATE 1-27-05

HB 310



MTSBA

"...fostering excellence in public education
through
school board leadership."

TO: House Select Committee on
Education Funding
Lance L. Melton

FROM: Lance L. Melton, Executive Director
Montana School Boards Association

RE: House Bill 310

DATE: Thursday, January 27, 2005

The Montana School Boards Association supports HB 310 by Representative Glaser. HB 310 provides for a periodic review of the basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools. The assignment of this important process to the education and local government interim committee will result in a predictable and reliable bipartisan process for ensuring the ongoing viability of the definition.

If there is any concern about having the Legislature define the basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools, it is concern with the static nature of laws and the risk of having the definition in law fail to account for new circumstances and innovations in public education that require a more dynamic process of change. HB 310 addresses this concern by placing the job of regular review in the hands of an established interim committee that has a history of working cooperatively and productively with the Board of Public Education, local school boards and others in the education community.

HB 310 could very well be part of a comprehensive solution to addressing the Court's opinion in Columbia Falls Elementary v. State. Paired with passage of legislation to provide immediate relief (through HB 125 (Raser); HB 124 (Facey) and HB 309 (Glaser) and some mechanism for funding Indian Education for All) and passage of SB 152's contemporary definition of the basic system of free quality schools, the Legislature would have a sustainable means of addressing school funding in an educationally relevant manner, both initially, and going forward into the future.

We appreciate Representative Glaser's efforts on these issues and urge the Committee's favorable consideration of HB 310 and the related bills referenced above.

Thanks