

EXHIBIT 1
DATE 2-2-05
HB 395

February 2, 2005

Representative Arlene Becker
Montana Legislature
VIA EMAIL

RE: HB 395 – Revise responsibility for cost of examination and detention of mental disorder

Dear Representative Becker:

This letter represents Missoula County's statement of support for HB 395. This bill would ease the burden Missoula County currently bears concerning the care of involuntarily committed individuals.

Please consider the following:

- Because Missoula County is one of only a handful of counties well equipped to handle involuntarily committed individuals. As such, Missoula County is charged with a disproportionate number of cases, and is responsible for the costs in their entirety. It is often difficult to establish the county of residence in these cases.
- The associated costs of involuntary commitments vary tremendously. Smaller counties experience difficulty in handling such varying costs.
- While Missoula County handles these cases efficiently and effectively, smaller counties may shift the intake of involuntary commitments to Missoula County.
- In fiscal year 2003 Missoula County paid \$169,680 for psychological exams in involuntary commitment proceedings. In fiscal year 2004, the figure was \$119,281. In the first six months of our current fiscal year, Missoula County has already spent \$138,164 on these exams. This excludes related costs such as transportation and court costs. Missoula County also invests \$75,000 annually in a mental health crisis team that provides an efficient method for evaluating these cases quickly.

The only clarification Missoula County would like to see in the bill is that the State cover the costs when the County is required to file a petition and request that the person be apprehended and detained (the person refuses to enter the hospital) which is the vast majority of the cases. If the individual is committed, Missoula County asks that the State cover these costs as well.

Please share this information with the other members of the House Human Services Committee.

Please contact Dale Bickell, Chief Financial Officer at 721-5700 ext. 4229 if you have any questions or need additional information.

Best regards,

Dale D. Bickell, CPA
Chief Financial Officer
For the Missoula County Board of County Commissioners