

EXHIBIT 17
DATE 2-16-05
HB 643

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915 4th Street NW
Choteau, MT 59422

February 16, 2005

TO: Arlene Becker, Chairman and Members
House Human Services Committee Members

SUBJECT: Support of HB 643

Dear Chairman Becker and Members:

I strongly support passage of HB 643-Tobacco Free Schools & Smokefree Public Places Law. This legislation will protect the health and the lives of many Montanans.

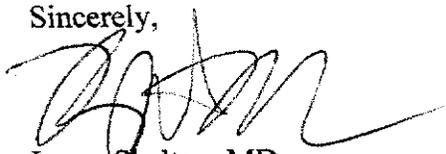
Secondhand smoke is responsible for 3,000 lung cancer deaths annually in otherwise health nonsmokers and it causes between 35,000 to 40,000 deaths from heart disease every year. It has been proved that even relatively low exposure significantly increases the risk of heart disease.

Secondhand smoke also causes emphysema and lung disease. Secondhand smoke contains over 4,000 substances, and more than 60 are known or suspected to cause cancer. The EPA has classified secondhand smoke as a Group A carcinogen, a substance which is known to cause human cancer.

Public places that are free of deadly tobacco smoke will prevent our kids from starting a lifetime addiction, help adults who want to quit smoking and protect our kids, seniors and hospitality workers from secondhand smoke that causes the premature death of 175 Montanans, per year who have never smoked but have been exposed to secondhand tobacco smoke.

I urge you to pass this public health measure. Montana lives are depending on it.

Sincerely,



Laura Shelton, MD
Health Officer
Teton County Health Department