

CHILD & FAMILY INTERVENTION CENTER OF MONTANA

David Morales, Exec. Director
3212 1st Avenue South
Billings, Mt. 59101

My name is Frank J. Lira, 3212 1st Avenue South Billings, Montana.

Respected Committee Members:

This is in regards to House Bill- 682.

I am here to represent the Child & Family Intervention Center of Mt. as an opponent of this bill.

Today I am not only representing David Morales and the staff of CFIC, but also the people and myself we serve.

I am the building supervisor and head mentor for the center.

My job is to care for the grounds and building and mentor troubled teens.

I do so by mentoring at risk youth who are assigned community service and who are not only looking for someone who cares, but also are trying to escape the dysfunction in his or her daily lives.

We receive referrals from all over the state of Mt.

Our main clients are the poor and under-privileged families who lack the basic necessities necessary to accomplish even the most basic tasks. Many of these families do not have food, clothing, shelter or transportation.

I, like my supervisor and the other staff at our non-profit agency, do not have any formal education to speak of.

What we do have is the history of our own drug and alcohol addictions and failures, but we have risen above our own fears and doubts and have managed to make it to the "other side".

This was not because someone had a social workers degree and shared that knowledge with us, but it was from those who took the time to care when no one else did.

This is what we do now, we care!

In 2004 we provided services for approximately 400 people.

We turn no one away, no matter of their race, religious preference, how they smell, act or how badly they are hurting spiritually, mentally or physically.

By passing this bill – you would be changing how these types of services could be changing people's lives.

As in this bill the definition of who a social worker is – includes myself, my director and all of our staff.

David Morales who is Exec. Director. Of the CFIC of Mt. now as it is, spends a great amount of his day writing grants, speaking and raising money in order for the rest of the staff to reach these throwaway kids and families.

This bill, if passed would require that we shut down our operations at the very least and we would have to find wages that would meet a designated social worker's expected level of pay.

This bill would actually decrease services available for the poor and needy of our communities by putting more restrictions on those who are truly trying to help.

We are only the Child and Family Intervention Center Of Montana.

What about those working in the rescue missions? St. Vincent DePaul, the Food Banks etc.?

Under this bill, all employees would have to be certified as a social worker.

At what cost to the community?

Non-Profit organizations account for most of the services rendered to the poor and needy. This bill would not only put undo stress and pressure on these agencies, but would also discourage future expansion of services for a very needy and real population in Montana, that not very many are willing to serve under the current conditions.

By having the requirements of this bill in place, it would become a hindrance to the poor and needy in accessing services.

Free services would become a thing of the past because we would have to find the pay for these social workers.

We pray that you would take the time to evaluate the harm that this bill would do to our communities.

Not to mention the harm it would bring to those in crisis, poor, disadvantaged who are already struggling to access help.

Please vote against House Bill 682

Respectfully

Frank J. Lira, Representing the Child & Family Intervention Center of Montana