

EXHIBIT 30
DATE 2-18-05
HB 737

**Testimony on
HB 737**

Dear Madame Chairwoman and members of the House Human Services Committee:

Deaconess Billings Clinic is a charitable, tax-exempt medical foundation, employing approximately 2,800 people to operate a 272-bed tertiary hospital, a 200 multi-specialty physician group practice, a 90-bed nursing home, and a research division. DBC also has six regional branch clinic sites in Montana ranging from Bozeman to Miles City as well as two branch sites in Wyoming. We also have affiliate agreements to provide management services to eight rural hospitals and every year, 52 physicians in 18 specialties provide outreach specialty clinics for residents of rural Montana, Wyoming, and North Dakota. DBC is also one of four equity members of a state-wide health insurance company, New West Health Services, which was formed as a mutual benefit corporation under Montana law and began operation in 1998. We employ a total of 36 physician assistants; 28 provide care in our Billings locations in the departments of orthopedics, cardiac surgery, geriatrics, neurology, neurosurgery, occupational medicine, rheumatology, urology, cardiology, family practice and internal medicine. Eight physician assistants provide care in our regional practices located in Bozeman, Miles City, Colstrip, Forsyth, and Cody, Wyoming. Physician assistants are an integral part of our provider base both in the multi-specialty group practice in Billings, as well as, our rural clinics.

As an employer, we are in support of this legislation to revise laws governing physician assistants in HB 737 because it streamlines the licensing of physician assistants, and by modifying the current utilization plan to a supervision agreement, it provides flexibility for the physician and physician assistant team.

On behalf of Deaconess Billings Clinic, I urge your support of HB 737. Thank you.