



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
200 WEST BROADWAY ST.
MISSOULA, MT 59802-4292

EXHIBIT _____
DATE 2-2-05
HB 669

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March 1, 2005

The Honorable Arlene Becker, Chair
Members of the House Human Services Committee

Dear Chair Becker and Members of the House Human Services Committee:

Missoula County supports HB 669 which establishes pilot programs for supervised visitation and safe exchange in families where there has been domestic violence, sexual assault and/or stalking.

Missoula County collaborates with the YWCA of Missoula on the planning and implementation of Planet Kids, a supervised visitation center. Missoula's project involves a multi-disciplinary Advisory Committee and uses established best practices in the operation of the center. Missoula County's law enforcement officers, judges and service providers acknowledge the particular need for safety and security protocols when these services are offered to families where there has been domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking.

Missoula County recognizes that there are compounded risks associated with non-custodial parents visiting children in families where there has been domestic or sexual violence. Risks include further harm to victims and children and abduction. Any Montana community would benefit from making supervised visitation services an option for these families.

Missoula County supports HB 669 with its necessary provision that pilot project sponsors possess expertise in the areas of family violence and power and control dynamics of family violence. Missoula County also supports the requirement that pilot projects establish security measures and operate according to standard protocols.

Sincerely,

Board of County Commissioners

Jean Curtiss, Chair
Barbara Evans, Commissioner
Bill Carey, Commissioner