EXHIBIT 2
DATE 3-2-05
HB 669

Kimberly Shay Baranello
5748 Prospect Drive
Missoula, Mt 59808

February 27, 2005

Health & Human Services Appropriations Committee
Helena, MT 59620

To The Health & Human Services Appropriations Committee:

I am writing this letter in regards to my personal family experience with Planet Kids Supervised Visitation and Exchange Center in Missoula, Mt. Perhaps by writing this letter, you will better understand the continued need for such a safe facility for families like my own. I know you have all heard stories before regarding domestic violence, but I wish to share (just briefly) my story with you so that you may understand my appreciation for Planet Kids.

My husband became abusive with me when I got pregnant. When our son was born, my husband became physically violent in our home; punching walls/breaking furniture all in front of our little boy. He threatened to throw me through a window, told me I would never get our son because he would just "get rid of me", he raped me several times, kept me from leaving our home, kept all of our money in his account, and threatened to kidnap our son several times. I'd lock my bedroom door at night and sleep with my cell phone under my pillow because I was frightened by his temper. But he always told me he loved me, and in public he was the nicest guy in town. It takes a lot of courage to leave an abusive man, and sometimes it takes a long time. Many books that are written today warn women, like me, about the court system and how sometimes the child's best interest is overlooked. Until recently in Montana, did the courts even have the option to offer parents such a facility as Planet Kids Supervised Visitation and Exchange Center.

I cannot even begin to tell you how Planet Kids has helped our family. Most importantly, it has provided us a safe environment. I can drop off our little

boy to spend a few quality hours with his dad while their playtime is being monitored, and I am assured that he will be safe. Also, it allows me to feel safe because my husband can no longer harass/abuse me during exchanges, in which our little boy had previously witnessed. The staff at Planet Kids provides a welcoming environment to ensure safety and to deter any possible danger, and many of them have gone beyond their duties to make it a positive and safe experience for all of us involved. Planet Kids has offered our family a safe environment where healthy relationships can hopefully develop. My job as a mother is to protect my child and Planet Kids has helped me to do that. It is a necessary safe place for many families.

I do not know what our future brings, but I am hopeful that Planet Kids will continue to help all of those families in need of safety. I hope that much support is given to Supervised Visitation programs statewide. It is through these programs that we can still offer our children a safe environment and a positive opportunity to develop a healthy relationship with the non-residential parent.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Shay Baranello

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