Room 102

Good Morning Madame Chair Coffman and members of the committee. My name is Noel Jacobs and I live in Helena. I would like to thank you for you time today and for hearing me.

We are members of the Family Outreach Program. We came to know this program because a year and a half ago, our oldest son, Kade, was diagnosed with autism. At that time, I was eight months pregnant with our second son. My husband and I were devistated. For those of you who have children, nothing can explain the excitement and anticipation you experience when you're waiting for your babies to be born. I took great pride in taking care of myself. I ate well, I stayed on task with my doctor appointments I did everything by the book. And still, through all of that great care, I had a beautiful boy with some life changing effects.

Because of Kade already being 2½, with Family Outreach, we had missed the age cut off to get Kade directly into the program. We were instantly discouraged. But we recieved counsil and were put on our first, of many, waiting list. This drove me to want answers. Why couldn't my special little boy get in? So I was given a name, Jeff Sturm, to contact to get some answers. Jeff was great, he explained the limited funds that were available, and encouraged me to be patient... Patience... something I am no good at, particularly when it involves my babies.

Three months later, we recieved "the call" We were accepted into the general fund program with family Outreach. This allowed us to have a case worker, who is terrific, and a small budget. My husband and I were extatic.

EXHIBIT 2
DATE Jan. 14, 2009
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Finally, some positive news. With our budget we purchased a special chair for meals, a learning table and chair, a therapy ball, and my husband and I were able to attend a class on occupational therapy. Our budget depleated rapidly.

Soon after, Kade started to get through some frightening changes. He sought out his brothers pain. One morning, I entered our living room to find Kade suspending Myles, our youngest, into the air ... by his neck. This was one of several episodes .... scratching at his eye balls, pulling his and our hair, sitting on him, .. you name it, it was being attempted repeatedly. Keep in mind, this was our infant child. I lived in constant fear, maybe I wouldn't be so lucky next time. So, I contacted Karla, our case worker, and explained the traumatic experiences. She wanted us to try for the intensive program for Kade. This would allow for ~~the~~ more funds for therapies, hab training, respit care, and most importantly, a medicaid card. So, we submitted all of the proper information, in hopes to be accepted. ___ Again, we were denied and put on another waiting list. So, we wrote an appeal, and I sent them to ~~our governor~~ the committee, our governor, and our house representative ... And we were denied for a second time. The grounds for denial? Lack of openings and funds.

Early intervention is key for autistic children for a somewhat normal life ... whatever that is. Ages 2 to 5, it's crucial to get as much help that you can, for these incredible little people. Lack of funds and availability for individuals to experience this amazing program and services ... is frightening for us. Please consider more funding for this program, so that there aren't so many children on waiting lists.

Your decision, alone, decides my sons future.