



EXHIBIT 13
DATE Jan. 14, 2005
HB _____

"A Resource for All Your Employment Needs"

January 14, 2005

Montana State Legislature
Human Services Committee
Montana State Capital
Helena, MT

Chairman and members of the committee:

I am writing as both a past recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation services and as an individual who now works in the field of human services. I appreciate your time and the opportunity to discuss an important topic with you.

I would like to address the Extended Employment (EE) funding issue. It is my understanding that this program is to be funded fully for the next two years and for this I and many other individuals are truly grateful. This funding source is extremely important for individuals who do not qualify for Developmental Disability funding but would be unable to work without the long-term supports that the EE program gives them. However, my concern is for the approximately 141 individuals who are currently on the waiting list for services. The wait for services varies from 2 months (Kalispell) to almost 15 years (Missoula) depending on the area of Montana the individual lives in. The average waiting time is currently 3.9 years statewide. What this means is that there are 141 individuals who are capable of working with assistance, but cannot, as there is no money available to help them receive the assistance they require. Therefore, the majority of these people remain at home living off Social Security benefits, food stamps and other welfare programs. As a service provider in the Billings area (waiting time of 4.5 years) I know first hand that there are jobs available for these individuals, and employers willing to hire them if the extra support system is available to them.

Our organization currently contracts to serve 21 EE individuals at an average cost of \$5,070.00 per individual per year. The majority of individuals currently receiving EE services work more than part-time and are paid more than minimum wage. They all pay taxes back into the state, have the satisfaction of going to a job on a daily basis, and are contributing members of society. They, like you and I, work and receive satisfaction and self esteem from their jobs and paychecks.

I and other service providers around the State of Montana would very much like to be able to serve additional individuals under EE funding. We are requesting an increase in the amount of state dollars allotted to this program so we can take additional citizens of Montana off the waiting lists and put them into the work force.

I thank you for your time and considerations and wish you the best in this legislative session. Montanans appreciate your efforts and hard work.

Sincerely,

Gregg A. Hafner, MS, CRC
Rehabilitation Director