

REPORT 21
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January 21, 2005

Dear Members of the Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Health & Human Services:

My name is Lori Evans, and this is Taylor Cornwell. I am the director of District 4 HRDC-Child Care Link Child Care Resource and Referral Program in Havre. Child Care Link provides Child Care Resource and Referral services to parents and families in Hill, Liberty and Blaine Counties and Rocky Boy and Ft. Belknap Reservations.

Good child care is an important step to school success. Studies show that children who get quality child care enter school with better math, language, and social skills. Most American families are using child care — 75 percent of children under age five are in some type early care setting. Good child care is often hard to find and afford. For most families in this region, child care is the second largest expense in their budget after rent or mortgage, easily costing \$4,200 or more per child per year.

Taylor is my grand daughter. She is 14 months old and has been enrolled in a Licensed Early Head Start child care center in Havre since she's been 5 weeks old. While I have been advocating on behalf of young families for over 10 years, as Taylor's grandmother, I feel personally compelled to take this opportunity to thank you for the investment you have made in maintaining our child care system in this state so Taylor and all children of Taylor's generation can benefit.

Taylor's mom & dad are both in school and working. They have dreams of gaining professional jobs in Montana as a CPA and a Dental Hygienist. They want to stay in Montana and raise their children here. Their first priority in meeting these goals is to ensure that Taylor is in a quality child care program so they can work and learn without the worry of their child's health and safety. This is where your thoughtful investment so far has paid off. Taylor is flourishing in the excellent care she receives while she is in child care, this has supported her family to help them progress in their self sufficiency goals as well as meeting Taylor's day to day needs to promote her development.

So, thank you for your support in meeting the needs of our youngest children - please maintain and uphold the system we have created, so families like Taylor's can stay in Montana - we can't afford to loose them.

Sincerely,

Lori Evans