

EXHIBIT 20
DATE Jan 27 2005

January 23, 2005

Dear Chairperson Christine Kauffman and Members of the Health and Human Services
Appropriations Subcommittee,

My name is Christine Lambert. I live in Butte, Montana with my husband Glenn Brackett. I spoke to you last year but I feel my testimony is still relevant. Some things have changed but most remain the same. For those who heard this before, I ask your indulgence.

We are the foster/adoptive parents of 4 sibling children, 3 girls and a boy.

My husband and I became foster parents to these 4 children from our area in 1994. They were ages 3-9 years. We adopted them in 1997.

I would like to tell you about our family and how the state of Montana and the US government has helped to make our children a success story. We receive a monthly subsidy and Medicaid for their medical needs with our adoption. We could **never** have adopted without these two subsidies. We are an example of why, and how successful, these monetary payments are to adoptive and foster parents. It has made it possible for ordinary people, of limited income, to adopt children in desperate need. This was the original intent of the subsidies, and it works.

All of our adopted children had been abused and neglected when they arrived on our doorstep. Within a year, all had been diagnosed with severe emotional problems, and or, mental illness. Our goal was to stop the pervasive loss in their lives and to stop the generations of abuse and neglect. We also needed to get them to mental health professionals, with the hopes they would eventually lead normal lives. To that end, we are seeing some success.

Three of our children are diagnosed with mental illness and Medicaid benefits pay for the therapy for all. One hospital stay 3 years ago saved one daughter's life. Upon hitting puberty, she slipped into mental illness and was bent on destroying herself. She spent a year out of the home in various facilities, all paid for my Medicaid. This daughter is now doing remarkably well **because** of this help. She is home, back in school, and on the path for college in a year. She leads a full and exciting life. Because of risky behavior exhibited by our son, he will enter the PATH Program as his sisters before him. He needed residential treatment for behaviors of self-harm. Our youngest daughter, who was violent for many years, is finally learning to deal with her rage and the outlook for her recovery, while guarded, at least is now hopeful. She, too, needed placement in residential treatment centers on two occasions. We could not afford to treat one of our children's emotional and mental illnesses on our own, let alone 3 out of the four, and wonder what would have happened if we were without Medicaid's mental health benefits.

Our oldest daughter, being in the birth home the longest experienced the most abuse. She struggled for many years with anger and resentment. For the first five years she was with us, whenever we would hug her, she would stiffen her arms at her side and dig her chin into our shoulders. She had no real friends and lived miserably in the small world of her siblings. Even with our best efforts, she really never had a childhood. But, we insisted she continue therapy, all paid for my Medicaid. About 4 years ago, she made a breakthrough and began to embrace us. Her life changed completely. She allowed herself to love us and to be loved in return. Soon, friends began to call, she was on the honor roll, and she began to have a healthy teen life. Therapy stopped. In January 2001, she applied for the highly competitive Congress-Budenstag Scholarship to study abroad her senior year. She was only one of four Montana students, 300 nationwide, awarded this congressional scholarship in 2001. She studied in Germany as a youth ambassador of the US government, met and charmed Chancellor Schrader, and learned to speak German fluently. She is now a sophomore at Montana Tech and doing well. We are so very proud of her, and you should be too. This is exactly why these subsidies are in place, to make a difference in a child's life.

When cuts are made in any funding, as they are in Montana, we personally feel it. We have to make decisions on what we can afford, not what the children really need. In the case of mental health this could mean life or death.

We have seen the positive results of your funding adoptions and Medicaid and ask you ~~not~~
to fund the mental health. Our work is not done but
to ~~cut any~~ of these programs. Our story is a shining example that Adoption subsidies and

Medicaid is changing the lives of abused and neglected children.

Sincerely,

Christine Lambert

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*s there a 60% increase
proposed*