

TESTIMONY FOR THE HUMAN SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE HEARING
FEB. 01, 2005 HEARING ROOM 472

Madame Kaufmann, Chair and Committee members, for the record my name is Nancy Marks. I run a small ranch operation at Townsend and I have two children adopted through Child and Family Services in 2001. My husband and I began this odyssey fostering a sibling group of three. We fostered them for 18 months after which the oldest one disrupted from our home. We then began extensive personal, family and group therapy. We have used all the services Child and family Services offered, and that we could find privately as our children are severely emotionally disturbed.

We have used psychological and neurological testing, reactive attachment therapy, the PATH program at Intermountain Children's Home, and residential treatment. We do group therapy and mentoring programs, as well as what our local school has to offer in school counseling and after school activities in order to give these children the help they need and we need to raise them.

We appreciated the services that have been available. We could not do without the subsidy to keep up a car, and pay for gas to get to where services are available. The \$400 a month helps also to pay for persons to help so we can attend the conferences, therapy and meetings for these children. We must pay for help to take care of calving for instance, when we must be away from our operation. We could not do without Medicaid for these children to get their medications and therapy because our health insurance opportunities, as ranchers, are very limited. We love the children inspite of all the care, but we put a great deal of ourselves into raising these children. We need your help to do a good job. We cannot shoulder the entire responsibility of raising them. We are also aware of all the children who still do not have homes, and how hard it is to get new families on board to help Child and Family Services raise these damaged children.

One of the most important services I would like this committee to consider is respite. Without respite, we could not possibly keep raising these children. The emotional and physical toll is hard to explain, but you finally just reach the end of your rope. Respite care paid for by Child and Family Services helps us and the children get through times when the stress is the highest. In 2003 my husband was working highway construction on the side of the state and I was running the ranch and taking care of the kids alone. Had it not been for a young man in the PATH program who took my son icefishing on Canyon Ferry, I would have had a nervous breakdown. It was so good for my son to have a break from me too,

I implore you to reinstate payment for respite, subsidies and services for those of us raising Montana's children. We have given our lives, please give us the support we need to be successful.

Thank you for your time

Nancy Marks
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