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EXHIBIT 6
DATE Mon 2·14·05
HB

February 14, 2005

To: Joint House and Senate Appropriations Committee

Re: Development and Funding of Mental Illness Crisis Facilities

Members of the Committee:

I am excited about the opportunity being presented which will significantly improve the mental illness treatment system in the State of Montana. Because I have a family member who has lived with a severe, disabling mental illness and because I have advocated for those individuals living with biological brains disorders for the last fifteen years, I feel the need for crisis services in the State of Montana has been the missing piece in the mental illness services all to long.

Because crisis services are available only in a limited number of Montana communities, The Montana State Hospital has become the short-term crisis facility of the majority of individuals experiencing a psychiatric crisis. This is not the best use of finances and the staff at the Montana State Hospital. In many cases short-term crisis and stabilization can be managed in less expensive facilities requiring less time and money. Crisis could be managed closer to home for less costs and the State Hospital would be able to be manage the mission for which it was intended and the hospital census could be managed better.

The challenge is to design facilities, which would be able to provide these services in a timely manner and for reasonable costs. I feel the Addictive and Mental Disorders Division is doing the best it can in a short time frame to formulate an effective plan. It is my hope crisis facilities will be designed and funded which will not only provide better care for individuals living with severe mental illnesses, but also are able to help the State develop a treatment system which will allow the State to provide more effective services for its investment.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gary L. Mihelish, President
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Montana