



BIG SKY RESORT

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February 16, 2005

SENATE EDUCATION

EXHIBIT NO. 6

DATE 2-18-05

BILL NO. SB-419

Montana Senate
P.O. Box 200500
Helena, MT 59620-0500

Dear Senator Elliot:

As the General Manager of Big Sky Resort, I am in full support of proposed bill SB#419, which would allow Big Sky residents the ability to extend their current K-8 district in order to create a high school. I support this legislation wholeheartedly for business, community and personal reasons.

As a full-time resident in Big Sky for 25 years, I have seen substantial growth in our community, particularly in the last decade when much of the framework for making Big Sky a true community—rather than just a resort—has been established through the hard work of our dedicated citizens. I believe a high school is one of the last—and arguably one of the most essential—pieces in this effort.

Without a high school, relocation of the young families that give our area its employment base and its community strength will forever be limited. It is simply asking too much of families to have their children out of town for over ten hours a day, riding a bus on one of the most dangerous stretches of road in the state. It is impossible to know exactly how many people choose simply not to move, work or buy homes here because there is no secondary school. It is clear that we lose many community members—often permanently—when they are forced to sell their homes here and move to Bozeman in order to keep their family together while their children are in high school.

I can say that our own family is already worried about what will happen when our two daughters reach high school age, especially given the seasonal demands of my job, which will keep our family apart for the better part of a year for eight years

A high school would allow employers to keep employees—and attract new ones—who have families. It would give Big Sky the community center we so desperately need, offering a venue for public services that we currently do not have, from a municipal swimming pool and athletic facilities, to a local auditorium, space for continuing education and more. The possibility of working with MSU through their Big Sky Institute (which would be located nearby) could make the facility a national—and even international draw.

I hope that you and your colleagues will give this bill their every consideration and unconditional support. I thank you in advance for your advocacy on this vital business issue.

Sincerely,

Taylor Middleton

General Manager