SENATE FINANCE AND CLAIMS
EXHIBIT NO. 8
DATE 3-3-05
BILL NO. SB 273

March 3, 2005

Montana State Legislature
Helena, Montana

Honored Members of the Montana State Legislature:

Access to health care is a real concern for our "last frontier" State. As Director of Montana's only Master of Clinical Medicine, Physician Assistant Program, I urge you to support the study of how Montanans can become pioneers in an innovative model for a Doctor of Medicine Program.

The extreme cost of a "traditional" Doctor of Medicine School, may at first blush seem out of reach; however, with a collaborative effort of the Deaconess Billings Clinic, Saint Vincent's Hospital, The Montana Family Medicine Residency Program, The University of Montana - Billings, College of Allied Health and The Rocky Mountain College School of Allied Health, Physician Assistant Program I am confident that a non-traditional Clinical Doctorate in Medicine Program could be developed with a substantially more reasonable budget and serve as a model for the nation.

The face of medicine is changing. We must consider adapting our medical education model to meet modern demands with more focus on primary care. We must look to more effective training methods such as clinical simulation emersion in order to serve the health needs of our citizens. By supporting this study, we can see how our State resources can be channeled to better serve the health of Montanans, rather than the current system which ultimately has low retention of graduate Physicians in our State. Studies show that by training in State, we will more likely see higher retention of physicians in Montana.

It is with enthusiasm that I recommend taking this important step toward improving our State's access to health care by supporting the study for a Doctor of Medicine Program in Montana.

Sincerely,

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