SENATE HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION
EXHIBIT NO. 7
DATE 4/5/05
BILL NO. HB 673

Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Becky Stockton, I live in Helena and I represent myself.

I support HB 673, Alternative driver education program. This is a much needed program for home schoolers. I have found that the home schoolers do not have a problem using the driver's education program in the big cities, but the school districts in some of the smaller districts will not allow home schoolers to enroll in their programs. So parents have to drive their children to the larger school districts to have their students take the program which is a time and financial burden on the parents.

I also found that when my children took driver's education it either conflicted with our summer plans, their jobs and their athletic schedules as to when the program was scheduled. Luckily for us, we were able to be drawn out of the lottery to have our children take the program on a self directed schedule and we were able to work around our obligations, but if your children were not selected in the lottery for the self directed program it became a hindrance for the family.

The cost of the driver's education program would drop for most families. Each school district sets a different price for the program. Townsend's program is about $40.00, Helena $110.00 and Missoula printed in their newspaper a couple of years ago the price being $350.00. There are many programs you can order off the internet or in school educational catalogs for about $100.00 and the parents can reuse this program on multiple children in their family and as a result save them money.

David Huff of OPI, testified as an informational witness in the Transportation hearing on 2/16/2005, that home schooled parents have a special child to parent bond and have shown that they are very capable of teaching their own children, so why not let them be able to teach them how to drive. Parents can teach their children how to drive at age 16 under the present law, why can't they teach their children at an earlier age.

Also this bill allows for a lot more instruction and driving time for each student. This would make students better drivers and produce fewer accidents because they are better trained. Parents would make better instructors because they have a personal interest in having their children know how to drive well because they do not want their child to get in an accident where they could be killed, hurt other drivers and passengers and damage their or someone else's vehicles. Remember, the parent is the ultimate one who is responsible to pay the insurance bill, replace a car or lose a child.

The House was in favor of this bill and it passed 54 to 45. Please vote yes on HB 673. It is very much needed. Thank you.

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