Exhibit No. 4
Date 1-19-05
Bill No. SB 104

Testimony for Senate Bill No. 104

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I am Jo Ann Walsh Dotson, the Bureau Chief of the Family and Community Health Bureau in the Department of Public Health and Human Services:

On behalf of the Department of Public Health and Human Services, **we offer our support of SB 104,** which creates a graduated driver's licensing program that will allow persons under 18 years of age to progressively develop and improve their driving skills in the safest possible environment and that will improve highway safety by reducing the disproportionately high incidence of motor vehicle accidents involving minors.

Montana's Fetal, Infant and Child Mortality Review program has identified motor vehicle crashes as accounting for over half of the unintentional injury deaths of all infants and children in this state. In 2001 and 2002, death certificates identified 45 child victims of motor vehicle incidents, and FICMR teams confirmed that 36 of these deaths were motor vehicle crash deaths.

Twenty-five motor vehicle fatalities of teen drivers have been reviewed since the start of the Montana FICMR program in 1997. We have learned that youth motor vehicle fatalities are over twice as likely to occur in the Spring and Summer months, when road conditions are typically "good" in Montana. This was the case in the 25 teen fatalities reviewed....the road conditions were identified as "normal" for 15 of the incidents. It was driver error that was identified as a cause for 16 of these fatal crashes. Seatbelts were present and not used for 13 of the driver fatalities.

FICMR teams reviewed 41of the 45 deaths due to motor vehicle incidents, and determined that 38 of these 41 deaths were definitely preventable. **One preventable death is one death too many**. We believe that this legislation will help keep Montana's youth alive, and strongly lend our support to this legislation.

Hearing Date:	January 19, 2005
Hearing Time:	9 a.m.
Place:	Room 303
Committee:	Senate Judiciary