SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY
EXHIBIT NO. #5
DATE: 1-14-05
BILL NO. SB 29

SENATE BILL 29

SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

TESTIMONY OF REV. GEORGE HARPER, ON BEHALF OF THE MONTANA ASSOCIATION OF CHURCHES.....

When a person pays his or her debt to society -as determined by our judicial system - that person has every legal right which all other citizens enjoy. Our State Constitution guarantees that, doesn't it?

But beyond our legal responsibilities, we as decent human beings have a concern for our fellow citizens who are less privileged than we, especially for family members who must depend on someone else for the basic necessities of life.

The intent of our law, and the prompting of our conscience bring us here today.

Making laws and rules and regulations is a complicated business and sometimes a mistake is made. In crafting this complicated set of regulations that took effect in 1996, a proposed penalty for former drug abusers went too far. It unjustly continues penalties for one criminal offense that Montana Law does not allow for any other. And worse, it hurts some innocent family members that the law was intended to assist.

That one section of the statute can easily be rewritten to correct its fault. And it appears to us that Senator Schmidt's Bill 29 does that. So we urge you today to upgrade our state law by recommending that this bill DO PASS, because it serves justice and compassion as you do your job of promoting the public health, welfare and safety for all citizens of Montana.