

EXHIBIT NO. 15

DATE:

1-28-05NO. SB 257

**Testimony by Gene Vuckovich on Senate Bill 257 before the Senate  
Public Health Committee on Friday, January 28, 2005**

Chairman Cromley and Committee members, for the record, I am Gene Vuckovich of Anaconda, Montana. I am a member of the Board of Directors of the Community Hospital of Anaconda, which is a designated Critical Access Hospital (CAH).

At the Community Hospital of Anaconda (CHA) Board of Directors' meeting last night, discussion took place regarding Senate Bill 257 and the effect passage of same might have on CHA.

I appear before you today as a result of the aforementioned discussions and to urge you to give a **DO NOT PASS** recommendation to this bill.

This bill would require Critical Access Hospitals, such as the Community Hospital of Anaconda to complete a Certificate of Need (CON) process to increase swing beds at the hospital. This is a very expensive and exhaustive process for the local facility. It also takes control away from the local hospital to do what is in the best interest of the local community. As some of you may be aware, Anaconda/Deer Lodge County and many other rural counties in Montana have a very aged population and the hospitals need to be able to adapt services in a timely fashion as community needs change.

The Board of Directors of the Community Hospital of Anaconda concurs with the Montana Hospital Association that:

1. There is not the need for all the new long-term care beds that the proponents of the bill claim would be established.
2. DPHHS has determined that the Certificate of Need (CON) process should not apply to Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs).
3. The CON process is flawed and is not an effective way to ensure there is not too much capacity.

For the above stated reasons and on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Community Hospital of Anaconda, I urge this committee to give a **DO NOT PASS** recommendation to this bill.