SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY
EXHIBIT NO. 11
DATE: 2-18-05
BILL NO. SB 448

February 18, 2005

To: Montana Senate Public Health, Welfare and Safety Committee
Senator Brent Cromley, Chair

From: Jean Ballantyne, PhD, MN, RN
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RE: SENATE BILL NO. 448

Senator Cromley and Committee Members:

As a registered nurse and nurse educator, I am here to submit testimony in opposition to SB 448. My background includes 16 years of practice in rural hospitals, including 8 years in Shelby. I hold a masters degree in rural nursing from Montana State University and a PhD in Nursing from Oregon Health & Science University.

I am opposed to SB 448 for the following reasons:

- EMTs are not educationally prepared to manage the care of patients in the emergency room. EMT training does not assume nor include any in-hospital role.
- By allowing the Board of Medical Examiners to expand EMT practice to the hospital setting, you are giving permission to replace licensed emergency room staff with EMTs.
- This bill is not a rural solution to the nursing shortage. EMTs in rural areas are volunteers rather than hospital employees. EMTs have a limited role in responding to emergencies in the field, and the skills required are at a lower level of risk in comparison to the skills required of emergency room doctors and nurses. I cannot imagine that they would want the added responsibilities and liabilities of emergency room practice. Never in my 16 years of rural practice did I see the need for EMTs to perform medical or nursing functions in the emergency room. The real need is for more professional nurses and there are other ways to address the shortage.
- Movement of EMTs into the hospital setting creates another classification of health care worker without determining the need or defining the relationship of this worker to licensed health care providers.
- In my view, this legislation is promoted by large hospitals that employ EMTs and want to keep them busy in the emergency department when they are not out in the field. This bill is not a "rural solution" to the shortage of licensed providers.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.