

EXHIBIT NO. 12

DATE: 2-18-05

BILL NO. SB 448

February 18, 2005

To: Montana Senate Public Health, Welfare and Safety Committee

From: Jane Scharff, RN

Re: Senate Bill 448

Chairman Cromley and Committee Members:

I must speak in opposition of SB 488. I am a registered nurse with a background in rural hospital care. Although I no longer live in a rural frontier setting, my friends, and members of my family do. Some of them are EMTs. I can tell you that this proposed legislation will not help them. **It will not help those who need emergent care, and it will not help those who need to provide emergent care.**

The vast majority of EMTs in Montana are volunteers. They are salt of the earth men and women who have jobs and professions, who own businesses and have families. They give their time and talents as EMTs to help their fellow citizens in times of emergency. **It is already a struggle for these dedicated individuals to complete the hours of initial and continuing training required to maintain their certification. They do not need more to do. Nor do they need the burden of expanded liability.**

Did you know that rural emergency department quality indicators in Critical Access Facilities in Montana are a topic of interest throughout this state, as well as nationally? They are. A network of Montana's rural hospitals is working to improve the processes of such things as stabilization and treatment of heart attack, emergency management of the surgical abdomen, trauma care, care of stroke in the ED, and documentation in the ED. **How can the Montana Hospital Association support this bill when the Montana Rural Healthcare Performance Improvement Network does not? As of last night, I was told that the group that is working to improve quality in Critical Access Hospital emergency departments in Montana is not in favor of SB 448.**

Expanding the role of the EMT into the hospital environment, and expanding the role beyond emergent care is not an answer to anything. It's not even a step in the right direction. Hospital emergency departments, both rural and urban, are required to meet certain quality standards in order to meet accreditation criteria. Emergency departments, both urban and rural, should not be staffed by EMTs who have a specific and narrow focus and body of knowledge. Emergency Departments, both urban and rural, but most especially rural, need to be staffed by registered nurses who have a generalist focus and a broad body of knowledge. **If you want to spend money, spend it on helping EMTs maintain the training necessary for their current scope of practice. Spend it on getting more RNs into Montana's emergency departments. Our citizens deserve no less.**

SB 448 is bad for Montanans. Please vote against it. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this matter.