SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY
EXHIBIT NO. 5
DATE: 3-9-5
BILL NO. H.B. 396

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Testimony for House Bill No. 396

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 HB 396**, an act allowing pupils of public and nonpublic schools to carry and self-administer prescribed asthma medication.

All asthma is serious. Asthma is not just a way of life for some children—it can also be a way of death. Asthma and allergies can happen any time, anywhere---in the classroom, on the playground or in the lunchroom, or on the school bus. Symptoms can suddenly become severe, and it is vitally important for students to have immediate access to their lifesaving medications at all times. In an emergency minutes, even seconds count. Rather than locking these lifesaving medications away in a cabinet, HB 396 permits students to manage their chronic, life-threatening conditions immediately, without delay.

An estimated 28,000 children in Montana have asthma. Asthma accounts for an estimated 50,000 lost school days each year in Montana and is the leading cause of school absenteeism attributed to chronic conditions nationally. Known asthma triggers range from viral infections to allergies to irritating gasses and particles in the air.

31 states have already passed legislation giving school students the right to carry and use their prescribed asthma medication. I urge you to support this common sense, lifesaving legislation, and give Montana school children access to their asthma medications immediately.

Committee	Senate Public Health, Welfare and Safety
Hearing Date:	March 09, 2005
Hearing Time:	3 p.m.
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