SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY
EXHIBIT NO. 2
DATE: 3-11-5
BILL NO. HB457

March 11, 2005

Testimony on HB 457 to the Senate Public Health, Welfare and Safety Committee,

Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Public Health, Welfare and Safety Committee, I am Courtney Funk, Director of Radiology at Deaconess Billings Clinic, a registered radiologic technologist and a registered MRI technologist. The radiology department at Deaconess Billings Clinic is staffed by (9) board-certified radiologists, over (50) full time registered radiologic technologists, and (1) Certified Radiologist Assistant. It is my pleasure to provide testimony in support HB 457.

A bill was put forward last year to recognize a new level of certification for technologists holding an advanced set of clinical skills. Radiologist Assistants are radiologic technologists with 2 years of additional training that allows them to perform routine radiologic procedures and assist the radiologist in providing patient care. They are trained to perform a wide range of procedures including image review and preliminary interpretation, fluoroscopy procedures, joint and body imaging, and minimally invasive procedures involving low risk to the patient.

RAs play a very important role at DBC and in rural Montana by extending the care and services that a radiologist provides. Many hospitals in Montana do not have access to an on-site radiologist. This limits a patient's access to tests and procedures. In past years, a radiologist would have to travel to the local rural hospital to provide routine procedures such as fluoroscopy. Many times travelling 50 miles or more to provide a small number of procedures. An increasing demand for their services combined with a national shortage of board certified radiologist forced them to discontinue services to rural areas. The radiologist assistant may now perform those services in the rural hospital with support and supervision from a radiologist allowing patients to receive care in their local community. DBC utilizes the services of a radiologist assistant to provide patients at Roundup Memorial Hospital and Bighorn County Memorial Hospital in Hardin with high quality radiology care. Four additional hospitals and patients in nearby counties would benefit from the services of a RA and we are pursuing hiring additional staff and expanding this important service.

House Bill 457 addresses changes that need to be made to current law to expand the scope of practice of the radiologist assistant. These changes allow for a broad range of procedures to be defined by the board of radiologic technologists which will involve levels of supervision that are necessary for safe patient care. The term "under general supervision" is removed and the board will be allowed to identify procedures in which the radiologist assistant should have varying levels of supervision including general, direct, or even personal supervision. Personal supervision requires a radiologist to be in the room during the procedure. This would be necessary for certain invasive procedures, such as venous or arterial access procedures or imaging of the spinal canal. Additionally, the bill clarifies language regarding the types of injections that the radiologist assistant may perform during procedures.

The bill supports the board's authority to license and govern the radiologist assistant and to define the scope of practice in accordance with national associations and current standards of care. The board should be allowed to take action in approving licensed and certified radiologist assistants without unnecessary delays.

I urge the committee to approve this bill and allow it to take effect immediately upon passage and approval.

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