SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY

EXHIBIT NO. 2

DATE: 3-14-05

BILL NO. HB 332

Energy Share of Montana
HB332 Testimony – Senate Committee
3-14-05

Mr. Chair, members of the Committee, my name is Rachel Haberman and I'm here on behalf of Energy Share of Montana.

Energy Share is a private nonprofit organization that helps low-income Montanans with their emergency heating needs. We've been in existence since 1982 and since that time have helped over 23,300 Montana households with nearly 6.7 million dollars.

We support HB332 because of the need in Montana for low-income energy assistance (handout). According to the 2000 Census, the number of individuals in Montana who are below 150% of poverty grew by over 12,000 between 1990 and 2000 from 213,392 to 225,447. Energy Share and LIEAP are only able to help about 20% of the qualified individuals. Yet all the while electric and gas rates have increased. Beginning April 1st many of these poor families will start having their power shut off, with very few options for help unless this supplemental bill passes quickly.

We've been getting 20-30 calls a day from people looking for help, and we're just a small organization. The low-income and working poor of Montana cannot keep up with these bills and need all the help they can get. Please vote yes on HB332.