

STS

EXHIBIT NO. 6
DATE 3-18-05
BILL NO. SR-13

3/16/05

Senate State Administration Committee Members,

I am uncomfortable writing this letter opposing the confirmation of Dr. Robert Wynia as the Head of the Department of Public Health and Human Services, DPHHS, because I do not personally know Dr. Wynia. I have, however, sat through various phases of testimony or questioning by legislative committee members and I have followed his comments since his nomination was announced.

I write this letter opposing his confirmation because I believe this department is in great need of review and oversight by someone with vision, experience and expertise in integrating the services in the department and making a large bureaucracy such as DPHHS more responsive to its constituents. Dr. Wynia has not displayed this vision or experience. Rather than bringing a new day for DPHHS, he has repeated many times that he will rely on existing staff and is not suggesting any changes in direction.

I do not find this reassuring.

As an advocate for low income families and children I have engaged with various programs in DPHHS for over 20 years. I have been on a number of advisory bodies. I am well aware that coordination and collaboration between programs that could benefit clients is often very limited. I am aware that decisions are often made before public involvement is sought. I am aware that final rule making decisions often do not reflect the opinions of those who attend the hearings.

I look for a director who will urge DPHHS to do better. Dr Wynia is not prepared for this role. I look for a director who can work with advocates and communities to protect the essential health and human service programs serving Montanans in need from the federal budget cutting that is threatened by the Bush Administration. Dr Wynia is not prepared for this role. I look for a director that understands what low income families face without health care for themselves and their children and that a private solution is not possible to meet their needs. Dr Wynia has not displayed this understanding.

Others opposing Dr Wynia's confirmation have told me they do not feel comfortable providing comments at this meeting because they are contractors with the Department. I would urge you to keep in mind the private comments you have received from service providers as you deliberate this appointment.

Thank you-

Judy Smith, homeWORD, 127 N. Higgins, Missoula, MT 59802, 543-3550

Let's discuss the real issues. I do not believe it is helpful for the administration or legislators to equate the absence of negative or controversial issues about Dr. Wynia as an endorsement of his ability or aptitude for this position. The promotion of his appointment should be based upon his experience and achievements relative to this position.

The leader is the one that gets followed. I believe our most vulnerable citizens and the many hard working staff at the department deserve a capable and passionate leader, one whom they can believe in and can navigate the many challenging and sweeping fiscal changes being proposed at the federal level. I can't think of any department that has the chaotic and vexing budget demands as DPHHS or so many opportunities to go wrong. Without seasoned management, the administration will certainly have a political tar baby and will still be looking for a capable director.

Thank you for your time and careful consideration of my views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Fitzgerald".

Jim Fitzgerald, Executive Director
Intermountain Children's Home and Services

Cc: Governor Brian Schweitzer