

EXHIBIT 4
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HB 13

**Testimony in support of House Bill 13
by Mick Robinson, Associate Commissioner, Montana University System,
before the House Appropriations Committee
February 2, 2007**

Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee, my name is Mick Robinson. I am the Associate Commissioner for Fiscal Affairs in the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education. On behalf of the Board of Regents, I speak in favor of House Bill 13. **The Montana University System encourages the passage of House Bill 13 for two major reasons.**

The first reason to approve House Bill 13 is college affordability for Montana students and families. This bill provides significant funding for cost-of-living and performance-related pay needs on our college and university campuses. The bill has an innovative feature that splits the appropriation into two parts. One part is the three-percent (3%) pay raise in both years of the biennium. This will greatly help our campuses recruit and retain the capable professionals who teach and support our state's college and university students. The other part of the appropriation, equal to six-tenths of a percent (.6%) of the payroll, would be reserved to meet certain other needs. These needs include contractual and policy obligations for faculty promotions, merit pay, and other performance or market-based pay needs for faculty and staff. House Bill 13 also provides important support of health insurance premium costs. Passage of this bill is essential to college affordability for Montana students and families. Every dollar of state support in this bill is one dollar that will not have to be charged to Montana students and their families in the form of tuition. The innovative construction of this compensation package, including the discretionary pay reserve of six-tenths of one percent (.6%), will help preserve educational quality at a reasonable cost.

In addition to college affordability, the second reason we support House Bill 13 is it represents an agreement that was negotiated in good faith. The agreement was negotiated between the Governor's Office and the same labor organizations that represent the majority of unionized employees in the University System. House Bill 13 may not be a perfect bill, but it is a very good bill and a delicate compromise. Honoring this good-faith agreement is vital to our goal of freezing college tuition for the next two years.