Regional Initiatives in Dental Education *(RIDE)* Program

EXHIBIT 3
DATE 2/12/07
HB 395

The Montana Dental Association offers its support for funding the RIDE Program by the 2007 Montana Legislature. Here's why:

Background: Access to a dentist in the rural and sparsely populated parts of Montana is difficult or non-existent. Our dentists are aging, and many dentists who retire are not being replaced, especially in smaller towns and rural areas. Montana does not have a school of dentistry, and as the population has grown, the state has expected dentists from other states to meet its workforce needs. This approach is failing.

The Regional Initiatives in Dental Education (RIDE) program is similar to the "WWAMI" medical program at Montana State University. It is created from a partnership with the University of Washington School of Dentistry, and would address the shortage of dentists in rural areas. With RIDE, first year students would attend MSU in Bozeman and then attend the U of W during their 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years, returning to Montana for clinical rotations of varying lengths, including an extended period of 4-6 months of clinical experience during their senior year. Students will focus on serving the rural areas of the state, as they are making plans for the future. The Montana Dental Access Coalition has identified this educational model as one solution to our dental workforce needs.

RIDE:

- Provides Montana with its own dental school without the expensive costs of bricks and mortar.
- Reserves eight positions in the dental school class each year for Montana residents to attend the University of Washington, a world renown dental school. Their first year would be at MSU with rotations back to Montana throughout their training.
- Appoints Montana dentists as adjunct faculty who receive training from the University of Washington. This would greatly enhance the level of expertise among Montana's dentists and ultimately benefit all Montana dental patients.
- Allows Montana students to compete for designated Montana seats, rather than competing as an out-of-state student in a large pool of applicants.
- Lowers tuition costs to students by providing them in-state tuition status. Similar to programs offered Montana residents in Medicine, Law, Pharmacy, and Physical Therapy.
- Highlights dental recruiting opportunities for practicing in Montana by providing extended clinical rotations potentially in all locations in Montana.

Projected Cost: The cost to initiate a RIDE program in Montana would be $2.4 million for the 2008-2009 biennium. Costs would include start-up operating costs, similar to expenses for the WWAMI medical program at MSU, pharmacy and physical therapy at U of M. Costs also would include expenses for the eight first-year students who matriculate at MSU in 2008.

Montana presently spends more than **$3.6 million per year** on educating **medical students** (in the WWAMI and WICHE), and nearly **$900,000** for **veterinary students**. It spends **only $234,000 for dental students.**

Jobs for Montanans: The Montana Dental Association supports this educational model because it allows Montana students to attend a significant part of their dental education in the state. The program will make definitive efforts to draw prospective students from rural areas of the state. The matriculation of students from rural communities to the University of Washington School of Dentistry, then returning to these communities throughout their curriculum is the KEY to the RIDE program.

Montana Workforce: A survey of the Montana dentist workforce was conducted for the Department of Public Health and Human Services in conjunction with the Montana Dental Association (MDA) in 2001. Data from this survey and other sources reveal:

- Montana dentists are older than the national average – 70% are 45 yrs or older, 26.7% are age 55 and older (2001 Workforce Survey conducted by Montana Primary Care Office and Montana Dental Association)
- In 2000 there were 51.9 dentists per 100,000 compared with the national average of 63.6 (American Dental Association, and the US Bureau for the Census, 2000)
- From 1990 - 2000 there was a 16.9% decline in the dentist to population ratio (Larson EH, State of the Health Workforce in Rural America, 2003)

Predictions for continued population growth in Montana, rising numbers of elderly who need dental care, and aging of dentists herald worsening dental workforce shortages. Without a dental school of its own, Montana must rely on other states for more than half of its dental workforce. Only 44% of the Montana dentists surveyed were from Montana. The current state-support for one WICHE slot and two University of Minnesota

MDA

Montana Dental Association
PO Box 1154
Helena MT 59624
800/257-4988 or 406/443-2061
fax: 406/443-1546
e-mail: mda@mt.net
www.mtdental.com

slots will not replenish the supply of dentists approaching retirement age. This system has FAILED and Montana is on the verge of a dental manpower CRISIS. Of surveyed dentists, 18.5% reported WICHE program support for dental school, and 6.1% attended the University of Minnesota. It is irresponsible for the Montana legislature and Board of Regents to continue to support the WICHE/Minnesota model of dental education when a superior replacement is ready to be initiated.

Support for Montana Students Seeking Dental Careers: The lack of a dental school in Montana continues to disadvantage Montana students seeking to enter dentistry. Admission to private and publicly-funded dental schools in other states is more difficult because of the competition for slots by in-state students.

Workforce Impacts Dental Access: The shortage of dentists in rural Montana impacts our disadvantaged populations the most. Some patients must travel long distances because the closest dentist is over 100 miles away. The RIDE program will address these access issues by directly delivering care to our most underserved population, while introducing future dentists to practice opportunities in those areas.

Feasibility Study: In 2005 the Montana legislature commissioned a feasibility study for RIDE program (HB 522). The final report will be presented to the Legislature in January 2007. Remember that the dental access crisis for our underserved, rural and remote community locations, and aging dentist population are begging for a solution. The RIDE program is that solution!

Solution: The RIDE program collaboration with the University of Washington School of Dentistry will address workforce shortages in Montana, **by ensuring students receive a significant amount of their education in Montana** – something not possible with other models (WICHE, U Minnesota). RIDE will also increase access to publicly-funded dental education for Montana students, without major new capital expenditures. Similar to the WWAMI program's collaborative model between the University of Washington School of Medicine and Montana State University, RIDE students would spend their first year at MSU with some course overlap with medical students. They would spend time in Montana at clinical sites during their second and third years and return for an extended period of 4-6 months of clinical experience during their senior year, as the students are making plans for their future.

Clinical sites would be spread throughout the state and include private practice settings, community health centers, and Indian Health Service sites. Students would serve underserved populations, providing immediate access to dental care for those most in need. The RIDE program will enroll and train 8 dental students a year, for a total of 32 students once the program is fully implemented.

The University of Washington School of Dentistry has worked with MSU, the Montana Dental Association, and the Montana Dental Access Coalition to consider this proposal carefully. Essential to this model is a strong collaboration among private practice dentists, community health centers, and faculty at both universities. The general infrastructure is in place at MSU today! All of these key elements have been assessed, and are present in Montana.

Montana presently funds over 13 doctoral and professional degree programs in the Montana university system.

Montana awarded 246 doctoral and professional degrees in 2005: Including the following:

Lawyers	80 graduates	Physical Therapists	18 graduates
Pharmacists	47 graduates	Dentists	0 graduates

RIDE is the RESPONSIBLE SOLUTION

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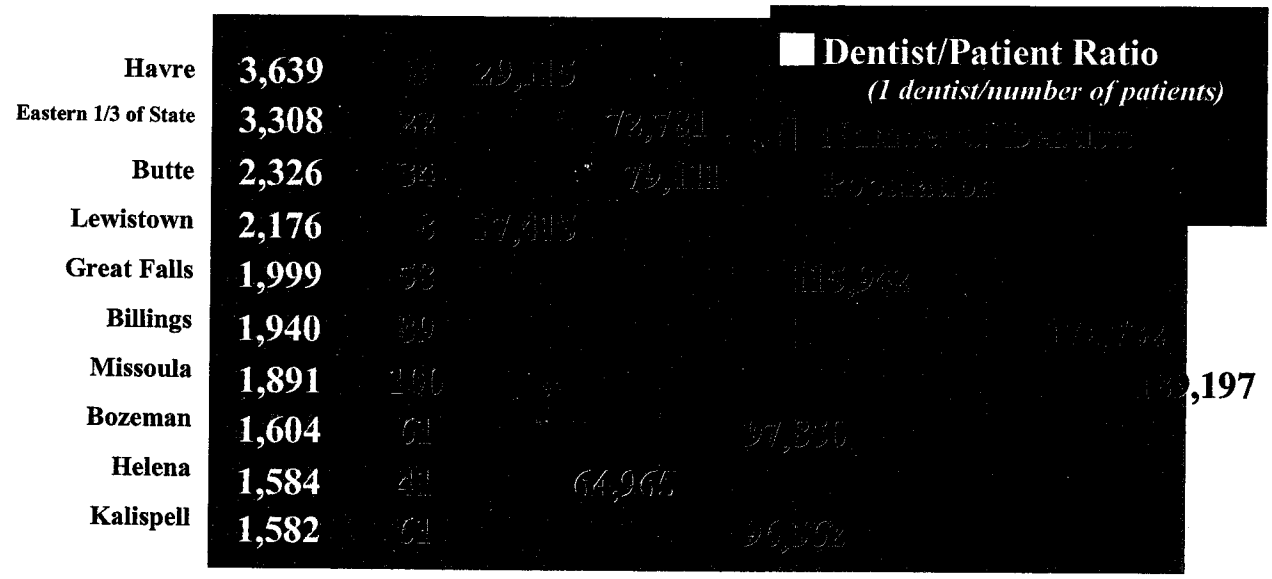
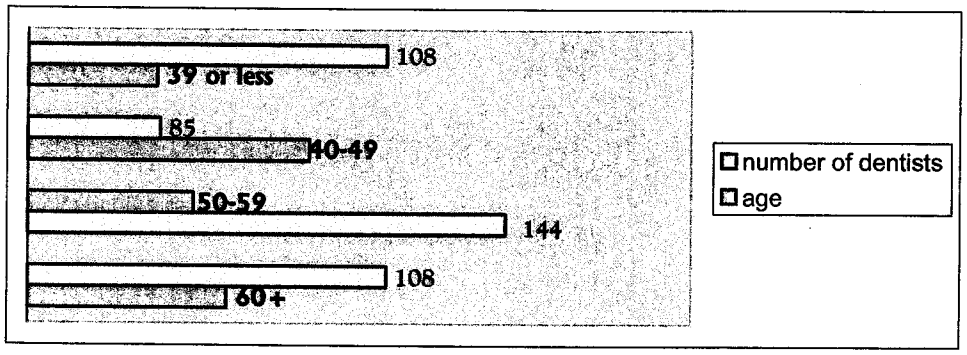
Montana Dental Association
PO Box 1154
Helena MT 59624
800/257-4988 or 406/443-2061
fax: 406/443-1546
e-mail: mda@mt.net
www.mtdental.com

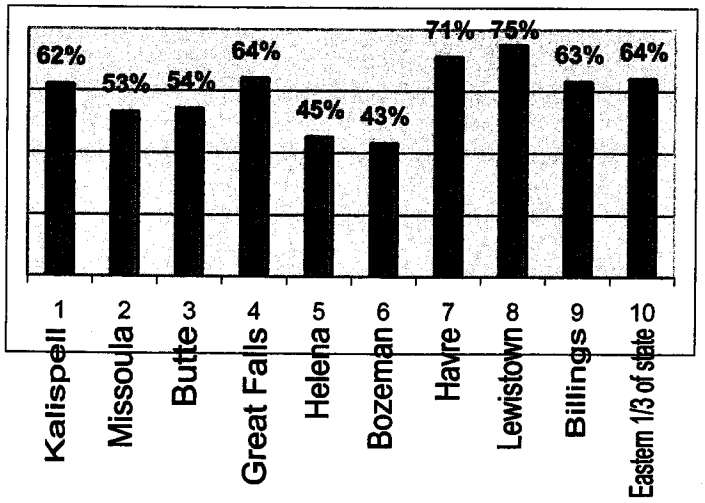
Dentist/Patient Ratio



MDA Actively Practicing Dentists in Montana



Percent of MDA Members 50 and Older by District



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Montana Dental Association January 19, 2007