

EXHIBIT 4  
DATE 2/13/07  
HB 541

From: "Geoffrey L. Birnbaum" <birnbaum@youthhomes.com>  
Subject: **FW: YEP**  
Date: February 12, 2007 4:34:31 PM MST  
To: <lms@hrcxi.org>  
Reply-To: <birnbaum@youthhomes.com>

Dear Jim Morton, Director, Human Resource Council 11:

The Youth Homes of Western Montana provide out of home care in an array of ways - from emergency shelter to treatment homes to foster care and back home (with support) and adoption (when home is not an option). These children face great uncertainty as they never know if they can ever get back home again or whom they can count on in their future as adults. This makes it even more critical that they gain the skills they need so they can take care of and count on themselves. While we will always be there for them - they must build a life that they can survive within and, hopefully, find security and comfort.

Therefore, I strongly support any amount (more is much, much better than less) of funding for the Human Resource District Councils to provide youth employment opportunities for ours and others' youngsters. The Youth Employment Program is a bedrock of anyone's efforts to help a disadvantaged child and mold their young life. While our work can become complex and the myriad issues hard sometimes to sort out and address it is simple, clear and strongly important that we can address two areas that are the jobs of our young people - LEARN and WORK. We have got to be able to teach kids to work. Work is their future as these children are the future of our communities, our State and our country.

Over the past ten years we are losing ground on the opportunities for our young people to learn to work before they need to work and support themselves. By teaching them the value of work and the return from a days hard work we are preparing them to contribute and be independent. What better gift can we give than belonging and independence. Please share with legislators our organizations support for the work of Human Resource Council 11 and our support for adequate funding for your work and the work of HRCs across our State. This program makes a difference!

Sorry I cannot travel over and add my support in person but hope this can serve as a strong endorsement for funds for Youth Employment.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey Birnbaum

 "To assist each child in finding stability, a sense of belonging and a place to call home."	
<b>Geoffrey Birnbaum</b> <i>Executive Director</i>	<b>Youth Homes Inc.</b> 550 North California Street Box 7616 Missoula, MT 59807-7616 tel: 406 721-2704 ext 223 fax: 406 721-0034 mobile: 406 370-3280
<a href="mailto:birnbaum@youthhomes.com">birnbaum@youthhomes.com</a>	

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Want a signature like this?

From: "Martin, Jennifer" <jmartin@communitymed.org>  
Subject: **Summer Youth Program Recommendation**  
Date: February 12, 2007 3:50:27 PM MST  
To: <lms@hrcxi.org>  
1 Attachment, 6.2 KB [Save](#) [Slideshow](#)

**To Whom It May Concern:**

The Summer Youth Employment Program with the Human Resource Council is a great opportunity for Missoula's youth to gain work experience. Experience is what will help youth get a job and keep it. The program gets them ready for the "real world", giving them an opportunity to learn what is acceptable and what is not. Usually, employers will not hire with out previous experience and will not give youth their first job. We have had some great participants in the program placed at CMC. I am sure that the experience that they gain here lasts a life time and that experience can be added to their resume. Lynda and Gael are great to work with. Please consider continuing this program.

**Jennifer Martin**  
**Patient Relations**  
**Volunteer Services**  
**Community Medical Center**  
**406-327-4258**



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HEIDI SIDES  
BOX 303  
SUPERIOR, MONTANA 59872

MR. JOHN SINRUD  
CHAIRMAN OF APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
HELENA, MONTANA 59601

DEAR SIR:

I AM WRITING THIS LETTER IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 541. I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THIS PROGRAM RETURN AND HELP OTHER KIDS WHO ARE NEEDING THE STRUCTURE I RECEIVED.

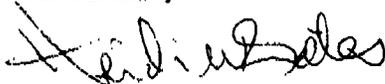
I PARTICIPATED IN THE SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYEMENT PROGRAM IN 1997, 1998 AND 1999 IN SUPERIOR. I WAS SHY AND INTROVERTED. I LEARNED MANY THINGS WHILE IN THE PROGRAM. I LEARNED TO DRESS APPROPRIATELY FOR THE WORK PLACE, TO ADHERE TO A WORK SCHEDULE, TO ARRIVE ON TIME AND COMPLETE TASKS IN A TIMELY MANNER. THIS EXPERIENCE HELPED ME GAIN SELF CONFIDENCE.

I LEARNED HOW TO BUDGET MY MONEY. MY FAMILY WAS LOW INCOME AND THIS REALLY HELPED TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF BECAUSE I WAS ABLE TO PROVIDE MY OWN SCHOOL CLOTHES. I TOOK PRIDE IN BEING ABLE TO PICK OUT MY SCHOOL CLOTHES AND PAY FOR THEM MYSELF.

I WAS AT RISK FOR DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL. I WAS TUTORED DURING THE PROGRAM AND MY STUDY HABITS IMPROVED. MY GRADES WERE BETTER IN SCHOOL THE FOLLOWING YEARS. AND I WAS ABLE TO GRADUATE. I WAS 19 AND DID NOT KNOW HOW TO DRIVE. MY SPONCER HELPED ME STUDY FOR MY DRIVERS LICENCE AND GAVE DRIVING LESSONS. THIS HELPED MAKE ME MORE INDEPENDENT. I WAS GIVEN ASSIGNMENTS IN BUDGETING, I WAS TO KEEP A JOURNAL AND IT TAUGHT ME DISAPLINE. EVEN AFTER THE PROGRAM ENDED, MY SPONCER CHECKED ON ME TO SEE HOW I WAS DOING. MY EXPERIENCE WITH THE HUMAN RESOURCE COUNCIL AND THE SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYEMENT PROGRAM WAS POSITIVE, THEY CARED AND IT SHOWED. IT HAS BEEN A SHAME THAT THE FUNDING FOR THIS PROGRAM ENDED, IT COULD HAVE HELPED SO MANY. MAYBE IT CAN AGAIN. PLEASE CONSIDER RE-FUNDING THIS PROGRAM.

TODAY I AM A HAPPY WELL ADJUSTED EMPLOYED ADULT, I THINK MY TRAINING WITH THE SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYEMENT PROGRAM WAS A GOOD BASIS TO BUILD ON.

SINCERELY,



HEIDI SIDES



1515 E Broadway  
Missoula MT 59802  
(406) 728-2662 • FAX: (406) 728-2879

RE: Funding for Summer Youth Employment

Dear Chairman Sinrud and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Joe Loos, I work for Friends To Youth, a small Missoula non-profit that provides counseling and in-homes services for youth and their families. Although my work schedule will not allow me to come to Helena for the February 13<sup>th</sup> hearing, I have asked for this letter to be delivered to you expressing my heartfelt support for fully funding summer youth employment. My interest in this comes from my many years of work with foster and other at-risk youth. My current work at Friends To Youth continues to confirm that access to "jobs" – that is meaningful paid work – is a critical part of the transition to young adulthood.

- *Kids Count* estimates 3.8 Million "disconnected youth" in our country between the ages of 18 to 24. Extended to 16 to 24, the estimate would be 5 Million. According to Linda Harris, Senior Policy Analyst at the Center for Law and Social Policy "These are young high school dropouts, youths who are in foster care, or in the justice system. The youth are disproportionately minority and low-income. They are low-skilled and far outside the labor market mainstream."<sup>1</sup>
- Poor children – those in the lowest 20 percent of income – are *six times* more likely to drop out than children from families in the top 20 percent of family income.<sup>2</sup>
- Youth Employment Programs across the country were changed significantly beginning in 1999 from summer programs employing large numbers of youth, to long-term programs with more comprehensive approaches serving a *fraction* of the previous number. In western Montana, in the area served by the District XI Human Resource Council the numbers dropped from 250 to 300 in a summer to 70 or fewer in a year.
- In 2003 as part of a community wide survey of homeless youth in Missoula *all* youth identified the need for help accessing employment opportunities.

**The prospect of paid employment is what keeps some youth in school, motivates others to resume their paid education, and often provides the most durable connections to mainstream society.** I urge you to help Montana youth disconnected by circumstance to reconnect with their communities. I urge you to support funding for summer youth employment. Thank you for your consideration of my concerns.

Warm Regards,

Joe Loos  
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Loos", is written over the typed name and title.

<sup>1</sup> Center For Law and Social Policy (CLASP). *Disconnected Youth: Educational Pathways to Reconnection*. July 9, 2004 Audio conference transcript, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, "Dropout Rates in the United States: 1999"