



EXHIBIT 19
DATE 3-5-07
HB 808

MONTANA ADVOCACY PROGRAM, INC.

The Civil Rights Protection & Advocacy System for the State of Montana

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March 5, 2007

House Appropriations Committee
Hon. Rep. John Sinrud, Chair

RE: House Bill 808, health and human services appropriations

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

The Montana Advocacy Program appreciates Rep. Edith Clark's leadership in promoting considerable additional funding for community mental health services in HB 2, as well as new dollars for mental health services included in HB 808.

As Rep. Clark's subcommittee heard, the rapidly rising corrections population and steadily rising State Hospital population are rooted in an underfunded community mental health system. The lack of capacity in that system ensures that offenders with serious mental illness will not have the community services and supports they need to succeed on parole and probation, so that they further swell the prison population.

We endorse HB 808's appropriations for mental health services and supports for offenders, increases in direct care worker wages and provider rates, mental health drop-in centers, suicide prevention, and—above all—expansion of the Mental Health Services Plan. These are very substantial increases for community mental health care.

Nevertheless, we also urge the Committee to restore or add the following appropriations:

- The subcommittee's appropriation for **behavioral health inpatient facilities**. Funding to ensure development of community inpatient beds both to meet local acute care needs and as an alternative to civil commitment to MSH is critical to bringing the State Hospital census down.
- The appropriation for **72 hour presumptive crisis services eligibility and tele-medicine services** that was included in both the executive budget and the subcommittee's recommendations. Despite the increased funding for the Mental Health Services Plan, it is unlikely that there is enough funding in MHSP to fully fund access to inpatient or other crisis services for this group. Access to intensive crisis stabilization services, including access to psychiatrists through a video network, are critical to reducing reliance on

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MSH and increasing community capacity.

- **Meth and chemical dependency treatment services expansion** money that was included in both the executive and subcommittee budgets. The shortage of chemical dependency treatment services contributes substantially to overuse of mental health inpatient facilities and poor outcomes for community mental health care.
- **Developmental disabilities waiver slot expansion** to the level recommended in the executive budget.
- Funding for the **Montana Youth Leadership Forum**, as recommended by the subcommittee. MYLF is working hard to turn the historical marginalization of people with disabilities into a future of community participation and full citizenship by teaching leadership skills to young people with disabilities as they enter adulthood. This program doesn't ask for much and it delivers a lot.

Thank you for considering these requests.

Yours truly,



Anita Roessmann