

April 3, 2007

Re: SB 498
To: appropriations

Dear Chairman and members of the committee, for the record my name is Mike Fellows of Missoula and currently chairman of the Montana Libertarian Party.

I rise to oppose SB 498 to study and implement Universal Health Care. Libertarians know that when the government gets involved with health care costs rise, and health care loses out. When medicare was first proposed in 1965, the costs were estimated at about 15 billion dollars by the 1990's. We have a program today that runs well over 100 billion and when you count the recent drug benefit that costs are well over 500-billion dollars. Government spends over 50 percent of all health care dollars. The one whereas that has some truth states:

WHEREAS, the bureaucratic paperwork for medical providers, insurers, patients, and government agencies that is used to determine eligibility and financial responsibility has been estimated to consume nearly one-third of all health care dollars nationally, while cost-shifting between third-party payers results in expensive gatekeepers aimed at reducing financial responsibility and in higher billing costs

Let's remember that HMO's were mandated by congress as a way to control costs and that didn't happen. There are many stories from other countries to the troubles of University Health care. In Saskatchewan, Canada: parents of 18-month-old Paige Hansen, who stopped walking, developed swollen limbs, and screamed in pain were told by government health care workers they would have to wait three weeks for a bone scan for their daughter. The Hansens took their daughter to another city where she was diagnosed with Leukemia. 12 percent of Canadian doctors and 4-percent of nurses believe they have had patients die due to health care waiting lines. We know that universal health care will put many patients at risk.

A new program by Washington State Doctors called SimpleCare is a program where patients spend more time with the doctor and less time filling out paperwork with the front desk. Dr Vern Cherewatento the president of SimpleCare

says this:

How does it work? We call it PIFATOS – Pay In Full At Time Of Service – and it is truly a “Cash-Based Revolution.” A patient sees a doctor for a non-catastrophic reason – yearly check-up, a nagging flu, a twisted wrist, an aching stomach, etc. The doctor bills the patient after the visit. The patient pays in full before leaving. Because doctor charges are anywhere from 25 – 50% inflated due to administrative costs caused by the health insurance industry, you’ll be paying drastically reduced rates for your medical expenses. In conjunction with a regular catastrophic health insurance policy to cover extremely costly procedures, PIFATOS can save the average healthy adult and/or family up to \$5000/year!

Other states like Tennessee have gotten into the health care business with Ten Care. Income taxes had to be raised to cover the raising expenses. Montana can do better than that. We need to find more market solutions to the problems of the high cost of health care. The legislature can start by not passing all those mandates, that rise the cost of health care and insurance.

HB 498 will be costly to the budget and we will see increased taxes to pay for this soon to be bloated program. I urge you to vote no on this bill and save the taxpayers.