



"Committed to the protection and promotion of public health."

Gallatin City-County Health Department

EXHIBIT 7
DATE 2/16/07
HB 479

February 14, 2007

Representative Rick Jore
Chair, House Education Committee
Montana State Legislature
Helena, MT 59620

Re: HB 479, Improving Access to Healthy School Meals

Dear Chairman Jore and Committee Members:

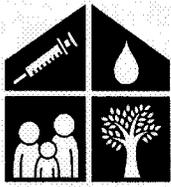
The Gallatin City-County Health Department officially voices its support for HB 479—*Improving Access to Healthy School Meals*. The purpose of this bill—to provide much-needed funding for equipment to serve nutritious meals at Montana school districts—is an essential facet for ensuring a new generation of healthy children and an instrumental step to stemming the tide of obesity in our current generation. We would like to extend our advanced thanks to the House Education Committee for considering HB 479 as well as our commendation to Representative Holly Raser for sponsoring this bill.

Like many other local health departments in our state, Gallatin City-County Health Department supports and promotes healthy behaviors such as the adoption of healthy eating habits. As with most health behavior changes, education can help people adopt healthy eating habits only to a certain extent. The introduction and implementation of policies supporting and promoting healthy options is another essential piece to solving the health problems, such as diabetes, of this and future generations. HB 479 is a step in the right direction—to assuring the hopes of our schools, families and communities that our children will learn and teach future generations how to live and stay healthy.

Thanks again for your consideration of HB 479. Please feel free to contact me with any questions at 406-582-3120.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Nelson
Health Officer



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY
Health Department

1930 Ninth Avenue
Helena, MT 59601
PH: 406.4HEALTH or 406.443.2584
Fax: 406.457.8990

February 14, 2007

Representative Rick Jore
Chair, House Education Committee
Montana State Legislature
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Chairman Jore and Committee Members:

The Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department would like to voice its support for HB 479, *Improving Access to Healthy School Meals*. We thank the House Education Committee for considering the bill, and appreciate Representative Holly Raser for sponsoring the legislation. This bill is vital to helping Montana children achieve success while at school. School nutrition programs provide balanced meals to children to ensure they are ready to learn. The bill seeks one-time only funding so that school districts throughout Montana can secure equipment needed to serve high quality, nutritious meals. Passage of HB 479 is greatly needed because the availability of adequate school foodservice equipment is directly related to the ability for the *School Nutrition Program* to prepare healthful meals.

Our department includes the WIC program, Home Visiting for at-risk pregnant women and families, the Cooperative Health Clinic, and other programs that work to bring equal access to health to all, regardless of income level. Increasingly, obesity and poor nutrition are associated with poverty. We have been working with the Helena School District and other agencies to address this and other issues surrounding poverty in our schools and community. As a public health issue, the Lewis & Clark County Health Department educates and advocates for prevention of childhood obesity and support for healthy nutrition. Lack of policies and infrastructures to promote and support opportunities for healthy nutrition are contributing to the epidemic of obesity among school-aged children. In addition, diabetes, heart disease and other serious health problems at later stages in life may result from childhood obesity. HB 479 provides support to schools to ensure that the families who most need access to healthy school meals and nutrition education will get it.

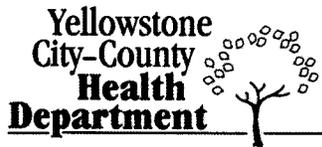
Thank you for considering HB 479 in committee. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at mreynolds@co.lewis-clark.mt.us or 406.457.8910.

Sincerely,

Melanie Reynolds, M.P.H.
Health Officer

Cc: Rep. Holly Raser
Reps. Scott Mendenhall, Hal Jacobson, Mary Caferro, John Ward, Harry Klock, Dave Gallik, Galen Hollenbaugh, and Jill Cohenour

"To Improve and Protect the Health of all Lewis and Clark"



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February 14, 2007

Representative Rick Jore
Chairman, House Education Committee
Montana House of Representatives
PO Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620-0400

Re: HB 479 – Improving Access to Healthy School Meals

Dear Chairman Jore and Members of the House Education Committee:

On behalf of the Yellowstone City-County Board of Health, I wish to go on record in supporting HB 479, *Improving Access to Healthy School Meals*. This bill is vital to supporting Montana children in achieving academic success. School nutrition programs provide balanced meals ensuring that children are ready to learn. This bill seeks one-time only funding for critical needs to run school meal programs enabling school districts throughout Montana to secure needed equipment for meal services.

The funding provided for in this bill will allow more children to participate in school breakfast or lunch programs while increasing their opportunity for better nutrition. In Montana, there are over 40,000 children living in poverty. School breakfasts and lunches may be the only balanced meals these children receive during the week. Good nutrition through balanced meals is essential for physical well-being, optimal growth and development, readiness to learn and lowered risk of disease. Through your support of HB 479, you will be providing Montana children with a healthy start to their school days.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 479. I look forward to working with you on this and other important public health measures. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at barbaras@ycchd.org or 651-6420.

Sincerely,

Barbara Schneeman, Manager
Communications and Advocacy

Cc: Representatives Holly Raser, Wanda Grinde, Michael Lange