EXHIBIT 27
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SB 152

Full-Time Kindergarten in Montana: It's About Time!

About 60% of America's kindergarten students attend full-time (six hours a day, five days a week) kindergarten. In Montana, fewer than 25% of kindergartners have the option of attending school full-time.

Educational research shows that Montana students are missing out on something the rest of the country has already discovered: ***Full-time kindergarten is one of the best investments a state can make in the academic achievement of its children.***

Montana currently restricts funding for kindergarten students to half the level of funding that it provides for other students. Under Superintendent Linda McCulloch and Governor Brian Schweitzer's proposal, this restriction will be lifted, allowing school districts to receive full-time funding for kindergarteners who attend school full-time.

Districts will not be required to provide full-time kindergarten, but if they choose to do so, they will receive resources to make this opportunity available.

The benefits of full-time kindergarten

Below is a short summary of recent findings from studies of full-time kindergarten programs in other states:

- ***Full-time kindergarten boosts student achievement.*** Students in full-day kindergarten have greater short-term and long-term learning gains than students in half-day kindergarten. This is especially true for low-income and minority students. *(Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, National Center for Education Statistics, and others)*

- ***Full-time kindergarten improves students' social and emotional skills.*** Kindergarten teachers know that the more time students have to interact with each other, transition between lessons, and devote to educational activities, the more confident, well-behaved, and comfortable they are in the classroom. Research on full-day kindergarten bears this out, and also suggests that 5 year old children are ready and able to handle a full day of learning. *(Early Childhood Research Quarterly)*

- ***Full-time kindergarten is a sound educational investment.*** Economists from every ideological persuasion have agreed: investing in full-time kindergarten provides a significant return on investment through higher student achievement and lower dropout rates. Research has shown that a $1 investment in a child's earliest years of schooling yields a $3 rate of return to the public by reducing costly special services and even incarceration. *(University of Chicago, Committee for Economic Development)*

- ***Teachers of full-time kindergarten are better able to assess student needs and address those needs.*** Teachers, when given adequate time with students, can diagnose learning disabilities, academic difficulties, and other barriers to student learning that often go undetected. Even if such problems are detected, there is often not enough time in a half-day setting to address these needs. Full-time kindergarten allows teachers the time to make important educational assessments early in a child's life, giving the best hope for lasting improvement. *(Early Childhood Research Quarterly)*

- ***Full-time kindergarten is pro-family.*** A 2000 study found that, after a second year of a full-time kindergarten program, the overwhelming majority of parents said they would choose full-time kindergarten (100% of full-time kindergarten parents and 72% of half-time kindergarten parents) for their child. Parents prefer full-time kindergarten because it means less disruption, less commuting, and more time for education and family centered activities. *(National Center for Education Statistics)*

Full-time kindergarten means more time for learning, more time for teacher assistance, and more time to give students a great start.

Points to remember about the State Superintendent and Governor's proposal:

1) **Full-time kindergarten is optional for school districts**. Districts will not be required to offer full-time kindergarten unless they choose to do so.

2) **Full-time kindergarten is optional for parents**. Parents are not required to enroll their children in public school until they reach the age of 7.

3) The total annual cost to the state will be approximately $13 million.

4) **Full-time kindergarten programs already exist in Montana** and have demonstrated very positive results in those districts that have them.

5) **A majority of Montana school districts have indicated that they will be able to offer full-time kindergarten** programs if funding is available from the state.

Full-time kindergarten means more time for learning and more time to give students a great start.

It's about time for Montana to provide the option of full-time kindergarten to all our children!