EXHIBIT 11
DATE 03/21/07
SB 123

Testimony In Support of SB123
Full-time kindergarten

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, my name is Jamie Palagi and I am the Bureau Chief for the Early Childhood Services Bureau within the Human & Community Services Division of the Department of Public Health & Human Services.

The Department of Public Health & Human Services is a partner in efforts to improve the lives of children from 0-8 years old and ensuring their readiness to learn and succeed in school.

Quality Full-time Kindergarten is an essential piece of the larger early childhood system. It has been identified as a key component for success in school and life.

Our Department and Division has the mission of addressing the negative impact of poverty on Montana's families. This focus on poverty raises two important issues regarding full-time Kindergarten. First, many of our clients live in poverty because they lack the educational qualifications to obtain a decent paying job. Many of them failed to complete or succeed in school themselves.

Second, children in low-income families frequently enter school already behind in literacy and numeracy fundamentals. Low-income families do not always have the resources or time to provide the stimulation and early learning opportunities to their children. Joining other quality early childhood programs, Full-time Kindergarten can help level this playing field and ensures all children have the opportunity to meet their full time educational potential.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 123.