

Additional Exhibit

EXHIBIT 24
DATE 1-15-06
HB 2

My name is Laurie Chilcote Kaiser. I am a parent of a youth with schizophrenia and developmental disabilities. I am writing to encourage you to support the house bill 98. This bill is extremely important to children who have multiple needs and are at high risk like my son.

My son is currently residing in the Texas Neurorehab Center in Austin, Texas, having been placed there due to a lack of facilities here for his special needs and illness. He was diagnosed with schizophrenia two and half years ago at the age of fourteen. He was hospitalized for nearly a year in the Providence Center in Missoula, unable to function safely at home. Due to the circumstances of his age and illness, the state was unable to provide any safe placement for him. He has been in Texas for over a year and the state of Montana has paid an exorbitant amount of money for his care during this time. Kevin is not unusual. There are several kids placed out of state as Montana does not have adequate facilities/care for these children.

In the year that Kevin was here, I worked with several agencies who had the daunting challenge of working together to provide the best services while trying to find funding available for my son who wasn't eligible for medicaid or social security. Without these agencies my family would be bankrupt from the hospitalizations, doctors and medication bills. They provided as much in home care as possible to help keep my family together and maintain our sanity. They did the best they could but there simply wasn't enough funding or resources to keep my son at home safely.

I had to send Kevin to Texas which was the hardest thing I've ever done. My son is so homesick and doesn't fully understand why he has to be away from home. His IQ puts him at a level of seven year old child. This boy is alone and without friends or family in a place with other extremely disfunctional children. I talk to him everyday and the everyday, he begs me to bring him home. The doctors who care for him there have stated that he is ready to be discharged. They recommend that he be placed in a group home here in Missoula. We have been waiting for a group home opening for six months.

This state needs more funding and services to provide the best care for children with special needs. The agencies in Missoula have all tried to provide the best for my son but were limited due to lack of funds and housing. I urge you to support Bill 98 to enable these agencies to accomodate children like my son within our own state.

These special children do not deserve to be send away. They need the familiarity of their own communities and support of their families and friends. These kids have enough to overcome without being "put away" in some other state. I believe we have an obligation as a community to provide for our own kids. The system for high needs children is broken. Bill 98 is a way to mend the break and pave a path of hope for many kids and their families.

Thank you for your time and interest.

Sincerely,

Laurie chilcote Kaiser