

EXHIBIT 2
DATE 1-25-07
HB Aging / APS Services

January 25, 2007

Proponent for Senior and Long Term Care HB-2

Good Morning. My name is Bea Ann Melichar, I live at 641 Luther Circle, Billings, MT. 406-690-2133. For the past 19 years I have served the elderly and their family members of Yellowstone County as the Executive Director of the Yellowstone County Council on Aging.

16 years ago I spoke for the first time at a hearing on HB-2 and I talked about the necessity of financially planning at the State level for the future influx of seniors across our state in the future. The future is now. And the Aging Service Network has been struggling to continue to provide quality services as the cost of the services rise, and the request for services rise and the funding levels don't meet the demands.

The Aging Network has received support some years, but even in the best years the support did not meet the increased requests for services. On behalf of the Aging Network, THANK YOU for your support of senior programs in the last legislative session. Without the special funds targeting Meals on Wheels...in Yellowstone County we would not have been able to serve over 45 people Meals on Wheels in the rural parts of our county. And still we have a waiting list for this same service within the City of Billings. The rural community of Shepherd wants to build a community center so they can have a congregate meals program and a Meals on Wheels program, we have senior centers that need new roofs, new stoves and ADA bathrooms. Where will the funds come from to provide support for these needs?

In Yellowstone County in 1980 there were about 13,000 people over the age of 60, by 1990 that had increased to approximately 18,000. By the 2000 census there are over 23,000 people over the age of 60 in Yellowstone County. These figures will continue to rise and with this rise in elderly population will be an increase in requests for services such as transportation, Meals on Wheels, and expansion of In Home Health Care services. In Yellowstone County we have 43 nursing home and assisted living facilities and we have one full time Ombudsman to check on these facilities and then to mediate between families, residents and facilities staff. And the number of facilities continues to grow. Without your support we won't be able to provide essential services throughout the next two years and we certainly won't be able to expand essential services. Every single program does fundraising on the local level to provide the current level of services. We can't hope to continue to provide this same level and quality of service without your support.

Please support the Senior and Long Term Care portion of HB-2 and the Area Agency Associations bill to increase funding for services to a very vulnerable population.