EXHIBIT 4
DATE 1/31/07
HB 5

A Consensus Statement on Montana's Mental Health Priorities for the 2009 Biennium

Central Service Area Authority
Licensed Professional Counselors, MT
MT Advocacy Program
MT Community Mental Health Centers
MT County Attorneys Assoc.
MT Mental Health Association
MT Sheriffs and Peace Officers Assoc.
NAMI- Montana
Nat'l Assoc.of Social Workers-Montana

The organizations that are signatories to this consensus statement collectively embrace and support the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. To that end we recommend that the 2007 Legislature support a process that will lead the state of Montana to establish an effective mental health system. The following represent the signatories' shared beliefs around the proposed AMDD budget and plan for 2008-2009:

1. We request that a mental health package of benefits similar to, but not necessarily limited to, the current Mental Health Services Plan, be funded at three times the amount currently in the AMDD budget, in order that uninsured Montana citizens have access to mental health services in their communities.

2. We support the 72 hour crisis care eligibility component of the budget, but believe that an additional $5 million in funding must be dedicated to community crisis services in order to create incentives for communities to develop and sustain acute response services as well as appropriate follow-up care.

3. We ask the Legislature to appropriate an additional $100,000 per year to fund Service Area Authorities as the critical element of mental health system transformation plus dedicated staff under the direction of the SAAs.

4. We urge a public process to fully consider STEP and alternatives before Montana makes such a long-term commitment of public resources. We support improved mental health services for convicted offenders, but we cannot support the proposed STEP program at this time. There was no stakeholder involvement in its conceptualization; we haven't been given adequate time and information to evaluate the proposal and possible alternatives; and we haven't been assured a process would take place that would involve stakeholders in substantive decision-making around the many details of the project's implementation and oversight.

We recommend that objective outcome studies be attached to all of the above appropriations for future program development and fiscal accountability.

We thank the Montana legislature, Governor Schweitzer, the Department of Public Health and Human Services and the Department of Corrections for their commitment to improving the mental health of all Montanans.