

EXHIBIT 6
DATE 1/29/07
HB 311

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January 28, 2007

TO: House Judiciary Committee, Montana State Legislature

RE: House Bill 311

Dear Friends:

As you can see from my address, I live in a very rural part of Montana, on a ranch. I also suffer from Multiple Sclerosis, and am a registered patient in the state's medical marijuana program.

House Bill 311 will vastly improve my life, and I strongly urge you to vote favorably on this bill.

First, I want you to know how important medical marijuana is to me. The fact is that without medical marijuana, I would live in constant agony. I know, because that's what happens whenever I run out of my medicine, which happens pretty regularly. That's what my life was like before I discovered how much medical marijuana can alleviate my pain and spasms. Even with the use of marijuana, my health has been declining steady for several years now, to the point where I can rarely leave home. I hate to think what state I would be in now without the help of marijuana.

I honestly believe I would have died by now if not for medical marijuana.

In my community, people depend almost entirely on nurses and physician assistants for our healthcare. If we want to see a doctor, we have to travel a long ways, which costs us money we don't have, adds a lot of time and discomfort to the process, and we end up with a doctor who doesn't know us the way our local nurses and PAs do. Including nurse practitioners and physician assistants would make a huge positive difference for people like me.

I am given huge amounts of morphine, which helps somewhat with my pain and muscle spasms, but not as much help as marijuana in my case. I also find that when I have marijuana, I can get by with much less and sometimes even none of the morphine. The problem with morphine is not only that it doesn't help as much, but also that it makes me feel like a zombie who can't do anything. Medical marijuana doesn't have that extreme

effect at all. All it does is immediately stop my spasms and lower my pain, including stopping horrible headaches almost immediately, whereas with the morphine I have to wait a while for it to take any effect at all and even then it doesn't work as well.

I am a member of a Montana ranching family who has MS. I am not a hippy and have no interest in breaking the law. But I can't grow my own marijuana, and depend entirely on a caregiver who doesn't live very close to me. And now that I can't get out of the house much, and can't drive, I have to depend on my mother to pick up my medicine. It's a horrible feeling to know that your own mother is technically breaking the law just to help you. I am not a young person, so you can imagine how old my mother is – she can't handle breaking the law! It's not fair to her or to me that we have to go through this.

That's another reason I hope you will pass HB 311 – because my mother could be my registered transporter, and wouldn't break the law whenever she goes to get my medicine.

The allowable amount of medical marijuana proposed in HB 311 is also important to me. One ounce doesn't last me very long, frankly. And the round-trip drive to pick up my medicine is over 200 miles, which costs us a lot for gas and time. It doesn't make sense for me to not be allowed to have a month or two of medicine on hand at a time. It's also difficult for my caregiver to produce a steady amount of my medicine with the small number of plants we are allowed to have. I didn't know anything about marijuana until I got MS, but it isn't easy to grow this medicine! More than half the plants never live long enough to produce the medicine. HB 311 would make changes in the law that will make this policy work much better for people like me.

I know a lot of people don't realize just how amazing marijuana is as a medicine for people with MS or severe pain and muscle problems. But I can tell you from personal experience, experience that I wish I didn't have, that marijuana is a truly amazing gift from God for people like me. But it's also the only kind of medicine in the world where the people who suffer and need it are expected to produce their own, following strict rules that make it extremely difficult to have the medicine you need, when you need it.

Please help us. You have the power to make the policy Montanans want truly work for people like me. Please call me if you want to know more. I would be glad to explain and answer any questions you may have. Believe me, I know what it's like to have no clue, and to think that marijuana is just a dangerous drug that people use at rock concerts or something. It isn't – it is a gift from God for people with problems like mine.

Thank-you very much for your help on this!

Sincerely,
Linda Merchant