EXHIBIT 12
DATE 2/5/07
HB 452

2-5-07

Madam Chair and members of the Committee:

For the record, I am "Chris" Christiaens, an Adjunct Professor at the University of Great Falls for the past 14 years and having worked with correctional populations since 1983. I am appearing on my own behalf today in support of HB 452.

The passing of this bill will award educational and employment credits by the Department of Corrections to a parolee to reduce time spent on parole. There are several reasons that this is a good idea, the one perhaps, most appealing is that of saving money to the taxpayers of the State of Montana. The savings will obviously depend on the numbers of parolees who take advantage of enhancing their education. The savings over a year in manpower for probation and parole would be in excess of $2,000.00 and frees them to concentrate on more demanding roles of their jobs.

The major benefits come from the education that offender populations obtain, in earning power, upward mobile employment opportunities, and the gaining of self esteem from their accomplishments. The ex-offenders enhance their own abilities to re-enter society and to become tax payers, supporting their families and being productive members of our communities through education which has always been a hand up to all who go to school.

It has been much experience over the past 20 plus years to observe those obtaining higher education that they have never returned to lives of crime and currently lead productive lives in their respective communities. Many of those I have worked with are with higher degrees of Bachelor's and Master's and doing well in their respective communities. Several who wished to be here today are unable to do so, because of the duties of their professions. Several are in roles of leadership within their communities today, primarily in light of their educational opportunities. Not only is my personal experience that of seeing the accomplishments, but all of the data collected from other states, bear out the fact that those furthering their educations do not re-offend. We as a state cannot loose from the benefits of this bill.

I strongly urge your support of this bill with amendment as presented by the sponsor. Thank you for taking positive action on this piece of legislation.

Have a good day!

Chris Christiaens
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