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MONTANA
QUALITY EDUCATION
COALITION

SENATE EDUCATION
EXHIBIT NO. 5
DATE 2-9-07
BILL NO. SB 390

TESTIMONY ON SB 390 – Sen. Carol Juneau
Senate Education and Cultural Resources
February 7, 2007

Chairman Ryan and members of the committee:

For the record, I am Pete Carparelli, Executive Director of the Montana Quality Education Coalition.

I appear on behalf of MQEC and as a proponent of SB 390 sponsored by Senator Juneau.

In previous testimony I have shared with you the goals of MQEC and its approach to proposed legislation related to the funding of Montana's public elementary and secondary schools. Although I will not present such a preamble again today, I will submit it as part of my written testimony.

> As you know, the goal of the Montana Quality Education Coalition is adequate stable on-going funding for quality public K–12 education as defined in 20-9-309 MCA passed by the Montana Legislature in 2005 and as assured by the Montana Constitution. MQEC is evaluating legislation proposed during the 2007 Legislature, and is supporting such legislation that adequately addresses one or more of the requirements of 20-9-309 MCA and meets the state's constitutional obligation to adequately fund our public K–12 school system. MQEC has provided an adequacy study, Estimating the Cost of an Adequate Education in Montana, and other information to assist the Legislative and Executive branches in their considerations of proposed legislation dealing with Montana's public elementary and secondary schools.

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MQEC honors the Court's recognition of the legislature's right to phase in any remedy over time, and MQEC supports legislation as part of a phase-in remedy that explicitly prescribes a cost-based approach and leads to a defined funding goal over a specified period of time.

MQEC will oppose legislation that is not consistent with 20-9-309 MCA and the Court's decision.

Today, MQEC supports passage of SB 390, "An Act Providing Increased ANB Funding and an Inflationary Adjustment for the Total Indian Education for All Payment ....." because it has determined that the bill addresses one or more of the tests applied by MQEC to the matter of adequate funding and/or quality education.

First, we see SB 390 as addressing the State's obligations under Article X, Section 1(2), 20-9-309 Section (2) (c) MCA, 20-2-501 MCA, so we think it represents one step forward toward a remedy for the problem of inadequate funding of our schools.

MQEC also supports SB 390 as one step in a possible phase in of several steps toward the achievement of adequate funding because the per ANB increases it proposes appear to be closer to the actual cost of implementation of Indian Education for All than the funding proposed in other bills that have come before this and other committees of the Legislature.

The inflationary increase to the Indian Education for All funding addresses and, in part, helps to meet the requirement in 20-9-309 that by July 1, 2007, the legislature shall establish a funding formula that is self-executing and includes a mechanism for annual inflationary adjustments.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, and sponsor Senator Juneau, MQEC would be remiss, however, if it did not state that even as it wholeheartedly supports SB 390, it believes that if the Governor and the Legislature would seriously address the need to

provide more adequate funding of and critical corrections to the underpinnings of school funding, that is the basic entitlements – the Quality Educator Payment, per ANB, per school and per district entitlements - the entire system would move more convincingly to the goal of adequacy that we must all address.

MQEC applauds Senator Juneau for her efforts to see that the commendable gains of 2005, after thirty-plus years of neglect, are not lost during this session. We urge you to take her lead as you consider this bill and others, and to assure that the momentum of 2005 is continued to a point of which we can all be proud and satisfied.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you this afternoon. Thank you, Senator Juneau for bringing SB 390 to the Legislature.