PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY
Exhibit No. 2
Date 3-9-07
Bill No. HB 117

Testimony: Public Health, Welfare & Safety Committee
Re: HB 117 Newborn hearing screening
From: Sandy McGennis
Date: Friday, March 9, 2007

Mr.Chairman and members of the committee-
My name is Sandy McGennis. I am an outreach consultant for deaf and hard of hearing at the Montana School for the Deaf & Blind. I have been working with the outreach portion of our school for nine years with newly identified deaf and hard of hearing children. In that time I have seen the benefits of the 1-3-6 model MT has tried to achieve. That is-- a complete hearing screening by **1** month of age, referral for audiological assessment by **3** months and appropriate intervention services in place by **6** months of age. Children who are early identified and receive intervention prior to six months of age have significantly better receptive language, expressive language, personal-social skills, and speech production. Late-identified children have developmental language skills which remain at 50-60% of their chronological age throughout their early childhood. Language development of early-identified with appropriate early intervention does not vary by degree of hearing loss, from mild through profound.
About 30% of my current caseload is comprised of young children who were identified early. For the families of these children I visit to see what their needs are, set up a family advisor from their local area that is able to visit frequently to carry through a structured program. We then provide information on communication skills, audiological questions and language development.
In closing let me share a story with you from my own family. My niece has a 3 year old son who was recently diagnosed with a moderate to severe hearing loss. The family lives in Washington State. The early diagnosis was missed at birth because the family could not afford the hearing screening at birth. Now the family and school system are playing catch up to give William the communication skills needed to express himself.
HB 117 will help families identify and intervene if a hearing loss is found in their children.