



Montana Food Bank Network

SENATE AGRICULTURE
EXHIBIT NO. 12.
DATE 4-2-2009
BILL NO. HB 583

April 1, 2009

Senator Donald Steinbeisser
Senate Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation Committee
Montana State Capitol
Helena, Montana

Dear Chairman Steinbeisser and Members of the Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Committee:

The Montana Food Bank Network is working on a project to build a Food Processing Center in the Deer Lodge Valley that would create a market for Montana producers, provide training in food processing for inmates at Montana State Prison, and provide much-needed food for Montana's emergency food system. The Network has worked closely with Bear Paw Development Corporation (one of the food and agriculture innovation centers that would benefit from the passage of HB 583). Bear Paw Development provided technical assistance to help the Montana Food Bank Network sift through the process of creating and funding a business and marketing plan and feasibility study for our Processing Center. As a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide food for hungry people, we possess neither the understanding nor the skills to traverse this complicated process. Bear Paw helped us identify funding options for our business plan and has written a successful proposal to secure a grant to fund the plan. Since this grant will not fully fund our business plan, Bear Paw is continuing to write proposals to fund the entire amount needed.

Montana's food and agriculture innovation centers are necessary to assist organizations like ours and other entrepreneurs who are committed to improving food manufacturing and/or alternative energy production in Montana. Many small entrepreneurs like us have a vision for improving economic viability for our state by providing a mechanism through which healthy food grown in Montana can be processed and consumed by Montanans.

The Food and Agricultural Innovation Centers is a necessary vehicle to rebuilding Montana's processing infrastructure through their support of projects like our processing center. By ensuring that these six centers can continue to provide technical assistance to Montana's food and farm entrepreneurs, HB 583 will help Montana retain a greater share of the billions of food and energy dollars Montanans otherwise ultimately send out of state.

Sincerely,

Peggy A. Grimes

Peggy A. Grimes
Executive Director

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AMERICA



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April 1, 2009

Dear Chairman Steinbeisser and Members of the Senate Agriculture Committee,

I am writing to support the funding request for the Bio Product Innovation Centers (HB 583). I am an agriculture producer who is involved in developing a local value added market for oil seed by producing biodiesel. I see value added agriculture and specifically the bio-based industry as a key component to the future viability of my community and rural Montana.

The Bio Product Innovation Center at Bear Paw Development in Havre has been a valuable team member to Earl Fisher BioFuels from the beginning. We would not have made as much progress without the support, encouragement and expertise of the Bio Product Innovation Center at Bear Paw Development.

It is without hesitation that I urge your strong support to secure funding for the Bio Product Innovation Centers (HB 583).

Best Regards,

Brett Earl

Brett Earl
Partner
Earl Fisher Biofuels
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