



M O N T A N A  
COALITION AGAINST  
DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL  
V I O L E N C E

TO: Senate Judiciary Committee  
FROM: Kelsen Young, Executive Director  
DATE: February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
RE: SB 379 – Create Offenses Concerning Illegal Aliens

SENATE JUDICIARY

EXHIBIT NO. 10

DATE 2/18/09

BILL NO. SB 379

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Kelsen Young and I am the Executive Director of the Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. We rise in opposition to SB 379 sponsored by Senator Perry.

We have concerns about this legislation for the following reasons:

- SB 379 creates state crimes for transporting, harboring, moving, concealing, or shielding any alien that someone knows to be undocumented or out of status.
- Domestic violence shelters provide shelter and services to all victims of domestic violence that seek services – regardless of their immigration status. In fact we are required to provide services without regard to national origin, race, or immigration status due to the fact that our programs are funded primarily with federal monies.
- Shelters in this state do not inquire about the immigration status of people who are escaping abusive situations and seeking shelter, but when people tell their stories with advocates, immigration status can be revealed.
- This bill makes it a crime to engage in activities that a domestic violence shelter would routinely engage in during the course of providing services to a victim.
- The issue of someone's legal status is complicated and it is unreasonable to expect that service providers will be able to understand the complexity of immigration law and be able to know or determine whether or not someone is truly here "illegally".
- We believe that we must create a community where everyone who lives here can fully participate, and live safely and free of violence. Please reference my testimony from SB 381 for further comments regarding the impact of these types of laws on immigrant victims of domestic violence.

I strongly urge you to oppose this bill. At a minimum, I ask you to consider amending the bill in order to address the issues we have raised regarding non profit organization's ability to provide services, especially those that receive federal monies. Thank you and I am available for questions.

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