

Exhibit No. 8Date 1-23-2009

SB 119: Medicaid Buy-In Testimony

Bill No. SB 119

1/23/09

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Mandi Edwards and I am here today because I would like to tell you how the Medicaid Buy-In would help me and many other people with disabilities in Montana. Personally for myself, I have 3 small children that I have to support and I have very high medical expenses in addition to other living expenses that would take a very high paying job to be able to afford on my own. As I'm sure you are all aware, high enough paying jobs are hard to find here in Montana and nearly impossible to get if you are just entering the workforce. I would love to be able to raise my children to have great work ethics by being an example to them but I can't do that and be successful in my professional life by living off of SSI and food stamps forever. I'm currently a student at Flathead Valley Community College where I am taking online courses in Medical Transcriptions. It's a great stay-at-home job that allows me to still be able to take care of my children and it's a job I can physically do and one I enjoy. It is a wonderful opportunity for me to make good money and show my kids that no matter what cards you're dealt in life, you still need to and can make a living if you're willing to work hard. But, I would not start out making enough money to afford to take care of living expenses, supporting 3 children, and cover all of my medical expenses if I was cut off of my Medicaid because of my new job. My only option would be to quit my job if I were to lose my Medicaid.

I am also currently working for Summit Independent Living in Kalispell as a certified Peer Advocate. Just in the last 2 months I have been able to go around to schools and talk to kids about disability awareness. I let them know what it's like to use a wheelchair and how I acquired my disability. I also let them know ways I could have prevented acquiring my disability, which by the way, was due to a car accident, in hopes to at least a couple of children to think about being safe when they climb behind the wheel of a car. I also will be matched with other people with my same disability to help them with getting out in their community and live life to its fullest! It would be very sad if people who get out there in our community can't do great things because they can't afford to lose their Medicaid!

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Proponent for SB 119