

Exhibit No. #1Date 3-9-09Bill No. HB 243

TO: Senate Health Welfare & Safety Committee Members

FROM: Jani McCall, VP Government Affairs

DATE: March 9, 2009

RE: HB 243 – Please Support

First of all, please accept my apologies for not being able to attend the hearing today for HB 243. I've asked Steve Nelsen, Executive Director of the Montana Children's Initiative Provider Association to share this letter and testimony for me.

Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch is in very strong support of HB 243, a bill that requires a report and recommendations regarding the Montana's Children's System of Care (SOC) to the 2011 Legislature. SOC is a family driven process of planning and delivering mental health and other multi-agency services to families and youth. It provides wrap around services and supports needed for success. The State of Montana must determine what the future will be for our high-risk children and families and for the System of Care and what needs to be improved or changed to make the it more efficient and cost effective. HB 243 will ensure that this is done.

In January 2001 over 135 high risk were being served by out of state providers. Alarmed by these numbers the Montana Legislature wisely put into statute the requirement for all state agencies working with high-risk youth to work in an interagency effort with families and providers and to create a state planning committee. In 2003 the language was strengthened by changing the statute to the federal children's system of care language and also by allowing statutory local planning teams like the Child Information Team to be the vehicle for local planning.

The Department of Public Health and Human Services is currently in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of a federal grant to develop the SOC not only at the state level but also at the local level. The local planning model is identified as Kids Management Authority (KMA). The KMA has two functions: community planning and child-specific planning. There are currently 5 grant funded KMAs and approximately 5 other KMAs that are not funded around the state.

Along with improved provider accountability and utilization review, the SOC and KMA process has been instrumental in improved data for Montana youth. Following are some statistics that show the success that the SOC/KMAs are beginning to have statewide and what the Yellowstone County KMA is experiencing.

- ◆ In January 2001 there were over 135 youth in out of state placements
- ◆ In January 2009 there were 14 youth in out of state placements
- ◆ From 2007 to 2008 there has been a drop statewide from 35% to 17% of youth being served out of state
- ◆ For the past 3 months Region III including Yellowstone County and 11 surrounding counties has had 0 youth served out of state.
- ◆ Between 2005-2008 Yellowstone County KMA has served 156 youth

Please support the Montana's children and families and the System of Care by passing this bill. This family driven model is a best practice nationally and early results indicate that it will be a best practice for Montana also.

If I can be of any other assistance please contact me at 406-670-3084. Thank You.