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MEDA represents over 230 members who are actively involved in local economic activity, community development, job retention and job creation for Montana.

January 19, 2011

TO: Chairman Walter McNutt and members of the House Appropriations Committee

RE: HB207 Provide support for network of Montana Food and Agricultural Development Centers

The Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA) consists of economic and community development professionals from across our state. Our organization represents more than 230 members who are actively involved in local economic activity, community development, job retention and job creation for Montana.

MEDA strongly supports HB207 and its funding for the Montana Food and Agricultural Development Center Network as the Centers increase Montanans' capacity to produce and commercialize food, farm-derived renewable energy, and other value-added agricultural products. In addition, the Centers retain in Montana the value that is added to our state's raw agricultural products.

The \$500,000 investment for the biennium in this program is not new money. The funds already exist through action taken by the last Legislature.

When you do the math, the \$250,000 annual investment in this program in its first year *has been leveraged nearly 40-fold into \$9.3 million in grants, loans and investments for Montana businesses that the Centers helped acquire.*

MEDA strongly urges your support of HB207 to continue the success of a program that provides technical and financial assistance to new and expanding businesses in the fast-growing regional food, farm-derived renewable energy, and other value-added agricultural sectors of our state's economy.

Signed,

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