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March 1, 2011

Representative Elsie Arntzen, Chair  
House Business and Labor Committee  
Montana House of Representatives  
PO Box 200400  
Helena, MT 50620-0400

RE: SB 221 (Waiver for ACOs in HMO Statutes)

Dear Madame Chair:

Rocky Mountain Health Network is a Provider-Hospital Organization of over 500 members and seven hospitals, including St. Vincent Healthcare, which is headquartered in Billings. We, like many other organizations in Montana, are transforming our care delivery systems. We must make the patient the center of the new system. We must put a system of care around the patient that works for them, one that is really accountable for their care. This system must produce high quality, lower cost, and improved patient outcomes, including their satisfaction.

The vehicle that has great promise to create the proper environment for delivery system transformation is an Accountable Care Organization (ACO). Simply defined an ACO is a provider-driven healthcare delivery system whose members share responsibility, financial risk, and a common goal to improve care delivery in partnership with given population of patients. Since some of the features of an ACO may remind people of an HMO, and in order for the healthcare stakeholders in Montana to have the flexibility to develop new systems of care that make sense for Montanans, we the providers of RMHN support SB 221 which would provide a waiver for ACOs in the state HMO statutes. Therefore, we would encourage the House Business and Labor Committee to approve this legislation.

Thank you very much for allowing our input.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul R. Cook, MD, MHA, CPE  
President/CEO  
Rocky Mountain Health Network