

## Testimony before Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee

Chairman Roberts and members of the committee, my name is Joe Briggs and I reside at 5900 Western Drive, Great Falls Montana 59404. I appear before you today in my role as a Cascade County Commissioner and on behalf of the other two Cascade County Commissioners.

As a county commissioner I am acutely aware of the difficulty in balancing a budget and have an appreciation for the difficult task that you are facing in light of the need to reduce the overall spending of state government to a sustainable level.

My comments today will focus on two key points; first I wish to make you aware that although the majority of the services provided to our aging population are done under contract through not for profit organizations, three counties including my own provide these services under contract from DPHHS. While I cannot speak for the effectiveness and efficiency of the other areas of the state, I can assure you that in Cascade County we deliver these services with a very low administrative overhead to ensure maximum benefit is delivered to the clients. We do this by a combination of methods including not charging the grant for any indirect support costs such as Human Resources support, legal support, computer support and other miscellaneous costs that are normally charged against grants. These costs are absorbed by our general fund. This coupled with our overall frugal approach to operations allows us to maximize the impact the funds our aging services department receives and provides the taxpayers with a very good "bang for the buck".

I am joined today at the request of Rep. Schmidt by our aging services director Rob Rung. Rob will be able to provide you with more specifics on the aging services programs as they are operated in Cascade County. Additionally, he has provided a one page summary of the impact the proposed funding cuts would have on the programs in Cascade County.

My second key point relates to the danger in budget cutting that results not in overall savings to the taxpayer but instead results in cost shifting from one line item to another or from one level of government to another. I am concerned about the potential of this type of result when it comes to the cutting of programs such as meals on wheels and Medicaid waiver. Given the much lower cost to keep seniors in their own homes and the burden on taxpayers that is generated when they move to the higher care facilities, I believe it is in the best interest of our taxpayer's long term to support these low dollar efforts to allow seniors to remain in their own homes.

In closing, I would like to thank you for service to the state and wish you well in this difficult task of balancing the state's expenses to its revenue.

Prepared by Cascade County Commissioner Joe Briggs

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