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Chairman Walter McNutt and members of the House Appropriation Committee,

Montana Women Involved in Farm Economics, WIFE, supports the Montana Cooperative Development Center as MCDC has been very successful in assisting businesses where the need for the cooperative model existed. MCDC is the only state wide organization committed to solely organizing businesses with the cooperative model. MCDC has assisted many communities with cooperatives to fill a void which existed in the community. There is the need for a service and the manpower to fill the need, but there needs to be the guidance to establish the business to make it a success. MCDC has been that catalyst.

MCDC has received recognition nationally for its success. Many hours are spent meeting with members of prospective cooperatives and in the visibility stages. In the last 7 years 40 cooperative businesses have been formed. MCDC has assisted in creating or retaining 442 FTE jobs through their assistance. MCDC has directed and managed 44 feasibility studies, 62 business and marketing plans, assisted 21 entities with applied research, provided legal assistance to 45 projects and financing for 41 projects. MCDC has provided training opportunities for 79 projects.

Some of the projects MCDC has assisted with include, but are not limited to: Linx Transportation Cooperative, Montana Branded Beef Cooperative, Last Chance Café Cooperative, Got Socks Clothing Store Cooperative, Montana Midwives Cooperative, National Native Leadership Cooperative, and Riverside Crossing Senior Housing Cooperative. As you can see these are very diverse in their scope and are filling a void in communities.

It is for these reasons that Montana WIFE supports the Montana Cooperative Development Center.

Thank you.

Mary Ann Murray
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2/3/2011