

February 11, 2011

To: Members of the Senate Committee on
Public Health and Safety
Montana State Legislature

Dear Senators:

I am a practicing physician who has been in practice for 35 years, 30 of them in Havre, Montana. I have experience in academic medicine and the practice of hospital and clinic Internal Medicine. I have been the President and CEO of a 17 provider multispecialty clinic in Havre as well. I currently practice in the VA Montana system in the new Havre community outreach clinic.

House Bill 272 deals with the granting of prescriptive privileges to PhD Clinical Psychologists. Similar legislation has already been passed in other states including New Mexico, a state with similar medical delivery issues to Montana.

This legislation recognizes the expertise of Clinical Psychologists in assessment and care planning and allows them to obtain additional training in improving their skill in clinical pharmacology, particularly as it relates to drugs used in the care of Mental Health patients. Clinical psychologists already are frequently familiar with many of the agents used and the physiology of mental illness. This involves some fine-tuning of that knowledge as it is applied to the selection and management of psychological illness. Like New Mexico, which already has such legislation Montana has a crying need for Mental Health professionals and particularly those with prescriptive privileges. Currently that is only psychiatrists. Passing this legislation would allow interested and motivated providers to obtain certification in psychiatric pharmacology and extend our ability to deliver comprehensive mental health care in more of Montana's communities. Mental Health support is not good in the State of Montana or most other places in the United States. Fiscal support for services continues to decrease, leaving the victims of mental health removed from care totally in many cases. The state hospital is over-filled, insurance support approaches nil. Patients without medications rapidly become an expensive burden on their families, communities, health care facilities and other practitioners, all ill-equipped to deal with them in many cases.

This legislation promises availability of services in places it is simply not available now. No longer will rural Montanans have to travel to larger cities lucky enough to have one or more psychiatrists to get care.

I urge your support of the adoption of this measure.

Sincerely,

Robert T. Henderson, M.D.
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