

SENATE FINANCE & CLAIMS

Exhibit No. 63Date 3-18-11Bill No. HB2

March 17, 2011

Senate Finance and Claim Committee
Montana Senate
Helena, MT 59620-0500

Dear Chairman Lewis and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Board of the Flathead Community Health Center, we are writing to provide comment on two issues important to the residents of Flathead County and the State of Montana. The mission for Title X established by the federal government in 1970 holds true today – “to provide individuals the information and means to exercise personal choice in determining the number and spacing of their children”. The provision of family planning services is the one of the most effective preventive programs in existence. Helping families plan for their children makes good economic sense. The cost of supporting a woman on Medicaid through her pregnancy, delivery and the first year of the infant’s life is approximately \$12,250. This would be a very real burden to the State of Montana if the estimated 5600 unintended pregnancies prevented in 2010 through the contraceptive services provided at Title X clinics had not been available. In addition to the very real benefit of unintended pregnancy prevention, Family Planning clinics also provide important cancer screening services and testing and treatment of sexually transmitted infections. Low-income women are the priority population for these important services. In Flathead County of the 3106 unduplicated patients seen in 2010, 76% were at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$22,350 – family of four) and 77% were uninsured. Without subsidized services, these women could simply not afford to access the services they need for themselves and their families. Reinstating funding for Family Planning services is crucial to the health and well-being of the women of Montana and the economic success of our State.

In addition to the critical need for Family Planning funding, we would also like to address the \$35 million dollars in Meaningful Use funding that is available for this State. These payments will provide essential funding to support health care providers in Montana to improve patient care and safety, comply with Medicaid and Medicare reporting requirements and join the national movement to integrate technology into the health care setting. The Community Health Center here in Kalispell could be eligible for over \$500,000 in funding that will assist in expanding services to meet the growing uninsured population in Flathead County. Every patient we see at the FCHC for preventive care and management of chronic illness represents one less potential emergency visit for an individual with an acute care need – a much less cost effective method of providing care. Given that 65% of the patients at this health center do not have insurance, they do not have other options for care. If this health center and other centers across the State lose this funding opportunity, dollars that could be directed for patient care will be utilized to assure compliance with the Medicaid and Medicare regulations. This hurts all of us – our patients, health care costs and the economy. Reinstating these important funds to HB2 ensuring that Montanans have access to the cost effective quality care.

Respectfully,



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