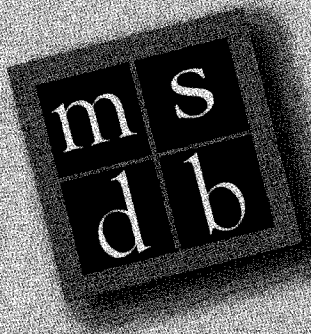
SENATE FINANCE & CLAIMS
Exhibit No. 10
Date 3-14-11
Bill No. HB 2

"Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much."

Helen Keller



MONTANA
SCHOOL *for the*
Deaf & Blind

Working Together to Give Montana's Deaf and Blind Students a Bright Future

At the Montana School for the Deaf & Blind (MSDB), we open doors to the world for deaf and blind children. Whether through the use of educational technology, creative expression, or ever-increasing new tools, a first-rate, caring staff leads children through those doors each year.

Building Blocks for Independence

MSDB's mission is to provide comprehensive educational opportunities for every deaf, hard of hearing, blind, and visually impaired child in Montana, enabling them to achieve their greatest potential for independence and success, including a productive occupational life and a meaningful personal and community life.

Children can attend the residential and day school on the Great Falls campus or receive services in their home school districts.

The school fulfills its mission using state funds supplemented by funds from the Montana School for the Deaf & Blind Foundation. The Foundation has provided significant funding for educational technology, an automated and updated library, job training and career preparation, a playground accessible for sensory impaired children, and many social and extracurricular activities.

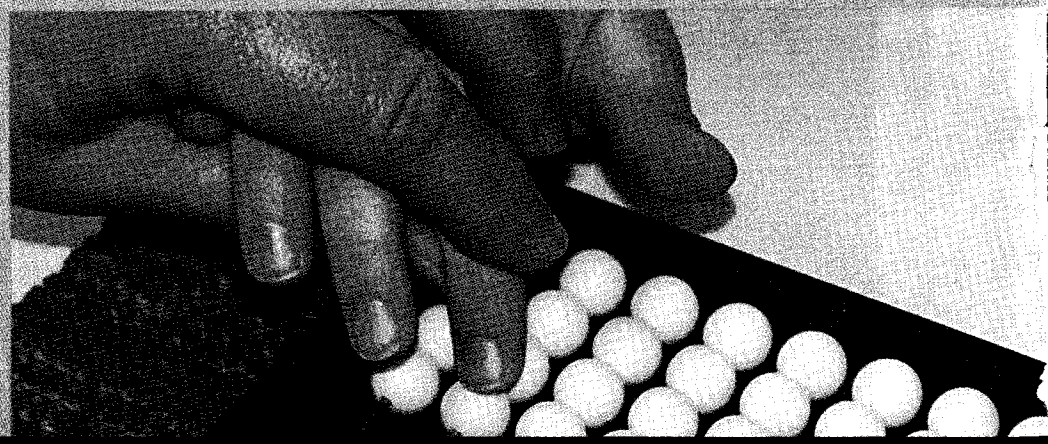
See pages 9-10 for more information about the MSDB Foundation.

Caring Expertise

MSDB maintains a staff of highly qualified, experienced and caring teachers and specialists trained to meet the specific educational needs of sensory impaired children. In addition to classroom teachers and outreach consultants, the staff includes:

- two speech pathologists
- audiologist
- orientation and mobility specialist
- physical therapist
- occupational therapist
- psychologist

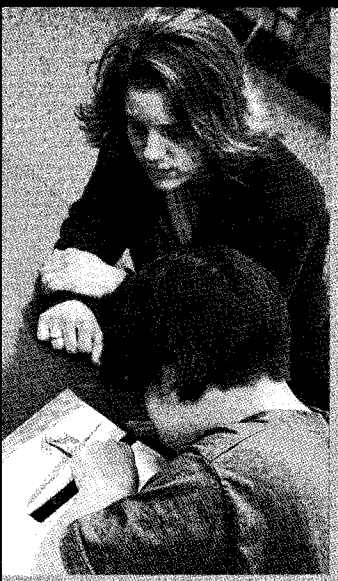
Their expertise is matched by their passion for their work, which is evident in all they do. This dedicated staff is committed to providing the best educational services to all students, whether in their local school districts or at the Great Falls campus. Access to this expertise has been and will continue to be vital to the success of most deaf and blind students across Montana.



Uniting Unique Children

At the Montana School for the Deaf & Blind, students have the unique opportunity to be with other kids like them. Here, sensory impaired children can communicate easily without a sense of isolation. The school's integrated learning environment is valuable in building self-esteem. The social and extracurricular opportunities at MSDB - many include interaction with hearing and sighted children - are an important part of the students' preparation for adult life. They share in the experience of being part of a group of people who understand challenges and overcome them.

Alone, the challenges we face are insurmountable; together they are small.



Educating Children as Individuals

Education at MSDB is tailored to each child's unique needs. The student works with a team to develop an Individual Education Program (IEP). Parents, teachers, specialists, a school administrator and a representative from the local district where the student resides make a decision about appropriate placement for the child on a yearly basis. Some students may take their classes and/or participate in extracurricular activities at MSDB, Great Falls Public Schools, or a combination thereof. MSDB provides sign language interpreters for deaf students attending public schools and support specialists for blind students. MSDB is conveniently located across the street from Lewis and Clark Elementary School and East Middle School, and a mile from Great Falls High School.

• Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
At MSDB, deaf children experience an environment where almost everyone they meet can speak to them and understand them. A staff and peer group who are fluent in sign language act as role models critical to the language development of each child. At the same time, we develop each student's potential for speech and use of residual hearing.

• Department for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Literacy, independence, and the use of technology are critical to the academic and vocational success of blind and visually impaired students. Through the expanded core curriculum, children at MSDB learn how to use computer technology, low vision aids, Braille, and important methods of orientation and mobility that free them to get around on their own.

Technology Opens Doors

MSDB provides exciting new technology that makes the world around them more accessible to sensory impaired children.

In addition, students, parents, and professionals across Montana can access the automated MSDB library through our online catalog. We continually update our collection to meet the needs of the students. We have a growing selection of Braille, Large Print, and audio books and a strong collection of materials for parents and professionals working with sensory impaired children. The School is also a depository for the federal Described and Captioned Media Program.

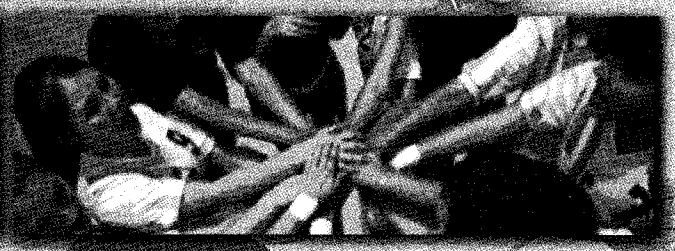
For more info on our educational programs, please visit msdb.mt.gov.

Building Self-Esteem Through Involvement

Extracurricular activities provide important opportunities for sensory impaired kids to build social skills, physical skills, and self-confidence. The MSDB staff encourages all of our students to be as involved as possible in the wide range of activities offered, both on and off campus.

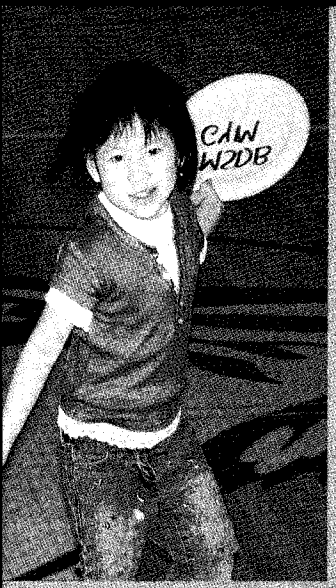
"As a member of the Expressions of Silence, I realized that just because I have a severe hearing loss, I am not limited in what I can do. I can accomplish anything with hard work and determination. I can do anything."

-Tyler Hansen, MSDB Graduate



"No man is an island unto himself."

- John Donne



Athletics

Our complete gymnasium facility, the Mustang Center, boasts a full-size basketball and volleyball court, Nautilus weight lifting room, swimming pool, and a bowling alley. Students play intramural basketball, bowling, swimming, volleyball, and soccer on campus.

At the junior high and high school level, students can participate in interscholastic volleyball, basketball, track and field, cross country, softball (girls), golf, swimming, tennis, soccer, and wrestling, through cooperative agreements with Great Falls Public Schools and Great Falls Central Catholic High School.

Activities for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Kids

• Expressions of Silence is a performing group of students who use sign language choreographed to recorded music to "sing" songs for audiences at various events. This popular group has performed with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the Oak Ridge Boys, in a life-changing performance in Salt Lake City.

• A team of high school students practices all year to compete in the regional Academic Bowl.

• Junior National Association of the Deaf (Jr. NAD) builds leadership.

Activities for Blind and Visually Impaired Children

• Goalball is a popular sport for visually impaired people. The goalball has bells in it that make noise as it rolls across the floor.

• At the annual Games for the Visually Impaired, athletes from around the state compete in track and field, gymnastics, gym activities, bowling and swimming.

• The Visually Impaired Performers, or VIP, use drama, comedy and music in their performances.

Leisure Activities

There's also plenty of just plain fun to be had, both on campus and in the community. Some of the kids' favorite activities are attending Great Falls Voyagers baseball games, movies, art classes at a local museum, and an annual trip to a UM Grizzly football game in Missoula.

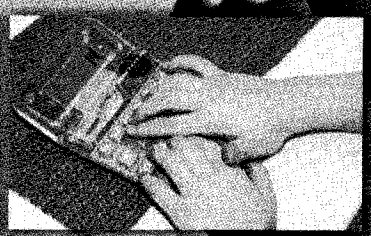
Reaching Out Across Montana

The Montana School for the Deaf & Blind's Outreach Program serves as a statewide resource center providing information, consultation, technical assistance, loaned equipment, and leadership, at no cost, to:

- parents of deaf and blind children
- public schools with deaf and blind students
- organizations and individuals concerned with services for deaf and blind children

"After gaining independent skills at MSDB, our partially sighted son is now in high school back in his hometown, where he is thriving with support from MSDB's Outreach Program."

-Beverly Blokzyl, Helena



Coming Together.

Sharing Together.

Succeeding Together.

Serving Kids in Their Home Communities

MSDB's outreach consultants are based in communities throughout the state, serving hundreds of children in nearly 100 school districts and preschools. The consultants play many roles, including helping parents participate in the educational planning process for their child.

We're reaching out across Montana to provide support for families who love and schools that serve deaf and blind kids.

Helping Families and Kids Live with Disabilities

We offer parent support in the way of information, referrals, and counseling to help parents adjust to a child's disability. Early intervention is the key to the successful education of sensory impaired children.

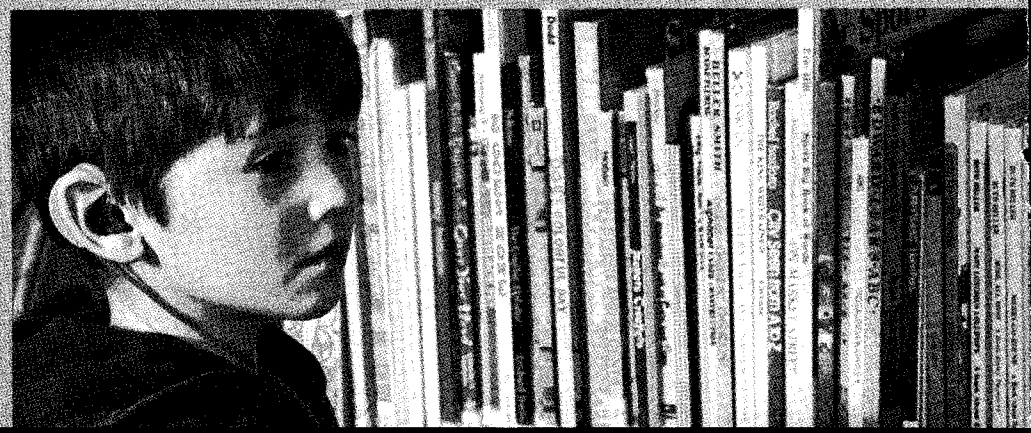
• MSDB's Family Advisor Program teaches families, in their homes, how to meet the unique needs of their deaf or blind infant or preschool age child.

• For families with children at the other end of the age spectrum, a Transition Weekend helps parents and their kids prepare for college and/or independent living.

Summer Programs

• Another opportunity for families to draw support from one another as well as from our staff is the annual Family Learning Weekend during the summer. One weekend is designated for families of blind and visually impaired children and one is for families of deaf and hard of hearing children. These popular weekends include dynamic national speakers and a wealth of information on learning to relate to a child's disability.

• Summer Camp is a chance for kids who attend school in their home communities and those who attend MSDB to come together for a week to socialize with their peers, develop independence, and learn new communication and technology skills. There is one camp for deaf and hard of hearing children and one for blind and visually impaired kids. For more information on our Outreach Program, please see our website at msdb.mt.gov.



Collectively, We Can Build the Path for Successful Lives

Montana School for the Deaf & Blind's Transition Program provides high school students with the training and experience they need to develop basic employment skills and independent living skills necessary to function as self-supporting members of their communities. The program includes:

- life skills training
- on and off campus work experience
- job coaching
- career planning and preparation
- guidance and counseling

Together
Everyone
Achieves
More

Campus Cottages – A Caring Home Away From Home

For children who live too far from campus to attend as day students, the Residential Program provides a supportive, warm and understanding living environment. Kids live in one of the five "cottages," which are actually separate wings of a large building. Each cottage is arranged like a home, where groups of either boys or girls of similar ages live, watched over by a house parent.

Living and interacting with other deaf and blind children teaches kids to communicate with and relate to others more freely. While enjoying a strong sense of community at MSDB, students are also members of the larger Great Falls community, performing at and attending local events. Whether in the community or on campus, residential students enjoy a wide range of recreational and leisure activities.

At the school's expense, students travel home for a long weekend each month during the school year, as well as for holiday breaks.

"Our profoundly deaf son has become a self-sufficient and mature young man prepared to handle his place in society. We are grateful to MSDB for the invaluable help he has received there."

-David and Nicole Franke, Billings

MSDB Foundation: Joining with You to Provide Hope

The Montana School for the Deaf & Blind Foundation is dedicated to providing deaf, hard of hearing, blind and visually impaired children with opportunities for academic and social development similar to those of other children, in order to better prepare them for independent lives.

Since 1981, with the help of many generous people, the MSDB Foundation has provided funds for school services and equipment not covered by state appropriations. The Foundation has provided significant funding for educational technology, an automated and updated library, job training/career preparation, and an accessible playground.

In addition to scholarships and achievement awards, the Foundation supports social and extracurricular activities that greatly enhance the students' self-confidence. These include holiday parties, proms, homecoming festivities, a yearbook, summer camps, field trips, the annual Visually Impaired Games, and the Expressions of Silence – a performing group of deaf students who use sign language choreographed to recorded music to "sing" songs for audiences at various events.

Help Us Help Them

The MSDB Foundation's ability to support future projects on behalf of the kids at MSDB depends on the generosity of others. Those who wish to receive a substantial tax credit while providing gifts under the Montana Charitable Giving Act can contribute to the Foundation's permanent endowment fund.

Other ways to help include:

- **An annual contribution**
- **A one-time gift for technology, library books, cottage furnishings or other items the kids need**
- **Include the MSDB Foundation in your Trust or Will**
- **Assist with grants from your company, association or foundation**
- **Memorial gifts**

Unity is
our strength.

Please give!

Call (406) 771-6040

foundation@msdb.mt.gov

P.O. Box 6576
Great Falls, MT 59406

http://msdb.mt.gov/foundation.htm

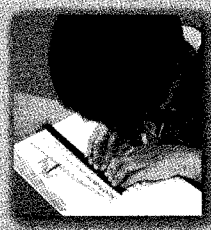
"Everybody in the blind community thinks Braille is the world. If there wasn't any Braille, all the books we read would be a blank spot in our minds."

-Trevor Johnson, MSDB 5th Grader

For more information about the school and its programs please contact us:

Montana School for the Deaf & Blind
3911 Central Avenue
Great Falls, MT 59405
(406) 771-6000
(800) 882-6732
TDD (406) 771-6063/6122
Fax: (406) 771-6164

email: info@msdb.mt.gov
www.msdb.mt.gov



© 2008 Montana School for the Deaf & Blind. All Photos ©Darrin Schroeder Studio, Inc.