EXHIBIT 4
DATE 3/15/13
HB 4

Susan L. Frew, LCPC, LMFT
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February 11, 2013
Re: MT State Loan Repayment Program

Montana Senate &/or House of Representatives
PO Box 200500
Helena, MT 59620-0500

ATTENTION DUANE ANKNEY & JULIE JOHNSON

Dear Legislature:

MT STATE LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM

My name is Susan Frew and I am currently practicing as a licensed professional counselor and marriage and family therapist in the state Roundup, Montana. I am writing to you today to let you know how important the MT State Loan Repayment Program(Bill HB 4) is not only to myself but to the community I serve.

In the small town of Roundup, a community about an hour north of Billings, there is a great need for mental health professionals. In Roundup there is a mental health center, which is only operational three days a week and booked months ahead. There is one private practitioner, who travels to Roundup an average of one to two days per week as well, she too is booked months in advance. I have the opportunity to work in the school as part of YBGR's CSCT program serving the youth. This has been a GREAT resource for the community as many of these children require mental health services. However, the families are either unwilling or unable to take them for the mental health services needed, do to reputations and financial problems. I currently have a case load of 13 with a waiting list of 12. In case you are not familiar with what that looks like, many of clients will be on my caseload for an average stay of one year. Some of the kids on our waiting list have been on there for over a year. The need here in Roundup is great, as you can see. However without the MT State Loan Repayment Program the ability to retain employees out here is difficult.

The Roundup Junior/Senior High also has a CSCT program as well. In the last year, the therapist position has turned over three times. This has had a great deal to do with the loan repayment issues. The therapists have attempted to retrieve the loan repayment but have not succeed at this point, mainly due to funding. It becomes financially difficult for licensed professionals to remain in such a remote area and make a living.

Working in a rural area as anyone knows, requires the ability to form and make relationships. With the high turnover rate the community has difficulty trusting and reaching out for services, even when the need is present. After working here for almost two years, I have been able to make a connection, not just with the school staff and youth, but with the families and the community. When I first arrived, I did not have one family that was willing to participate in family

therapy. Today my entire caseload is open and willing to do so. We are seeing amazing results as we work with the kids and their families to help provide changes and growth, not just with the identified client but with the entire family (parents, siblings, extended family). Please remember that these are families who have an extended tie to the community and typically would not seek out services due to their reputation in town and their location. This position along with the other practitioners in town, have opened the door to mental health for this small and remote community. Consistency in the positions is necessary for further growth and change to occur. The only way to ensure such consistency in the position is through the MT State Loan Repayment Program.

I hope the legislature understands the importance of this program to not only help those serving the communities but for the communities themselves. If you have the opportunity or time, I would highly urge you to contact the local school (Roundup Central Elementary) where I work to get a better understanding of the need and the desire for stability in the position. When voting on bill HB 4, please remember to think about the families and communities you are voting for and the need they have expressed through the use of the services here in Roundup, Montana.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and best of luck in the upcoming vote. I hope you are able to represent my vote and opinion in the upcoming bill.

Sincerely,

Susan Frew, LCPC, LMFT