

House Bill 98 Testimonies
House Human Services Committee
January 23, 2013

- 1.) Christean Ralph, Helena School District, Helena, MT
- 2.) Patti Steinmuller, Gallatin Gateway, MT
- 3.) Jan VonLindern, Executive Director, Columbia Falls Food Bank, Columbia Falls, MT

House Bill 98

Written testimony from Christean Ralph to the House Human Services Committee

- I have been teaching elementary school for 23 years. The first 15 years I taught in Libby, Montana before moving to Helena. Currently I teach Kindergarten in the Helena School District.
- In all of my years of teaching, I have been very privileged to teach in schools that have high poverty rates. When I began teaching, we did not have a breakfast program. Day after day, I saw children like, Jessica, Marshall, Tyler and many others, coming to my classroom hungry. The last meal that these young children would have eaten would have been "some resemblance" of dinner the night before. They would come to my class in the morning, drained and tired. It didn't take me long to realize what I needed to do for "my" kids...I brought in food to feed them. A child who is arriving at school hungry can't learn. I know that not only did I give the children in my class a quality education, but also didn't let hunger jeopardize their chances of learning.
- Breakfast has long been recognized as the most important meal of the day. Evidence shows that a healthy breakfast is linked to better concentration and behavior in schools. Breakfast is provided in my school now and the children come to my room at 8:30 alert, excited and really ready to learn.
- I think it is a travesty that all children are not given the chance to eat breakfast before a long day of learning. I strongly support House Bill 98, which will provide breakfast for our school children.

Patti Steinmuller

14665 Spanish Breaks Trail, Gallatin Gateway, Montana 59730

January 19, 2013

David Howard, Chairman
House Human Services Committee

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Patti Steinmuller and I encourage your support and vote for HB 98 which would provide funds to start-up new School Breakfast Programs (SBP) in Montana. Funding for HB 98 would be \$340,000 for the biennium.

I am a registered voter and resident of rural Gallatin Gateway. My local school is the Gallatin Gateway School which educates children in grades K-8. The school started a school breakfast program in 2011 which is serving students well. Although I have no children in the school I am very supportive of the school and its activities.

As you may know, research indicates that children who eat breakfast perform better in school, perform better on exams, and exhibit fewer behavior problems in school. Since schools are being asked to improve student test scores yearly, the legislature needs to consider the fact that many families in Montana are challenged to provide enough food to adequately feed their families. In passing HB 98, the state legislature would show its commitment to children and families of Montana by providing one time funding for start-up costs for schools without SBP and would fund Montana's share (30 cents) of the cost of reduced price breakfast meals. With 19.7% of children at 100% of level and 41.1% and children at 185% of poverty level (2011 census data), the legislature has an opportunity by voting for HB 98 to show its commitment to improving the health and learning status of children throughout the state. I advocate for passage of HB 98.

Sincerely,

Patti Steinmuller

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January 7, 2013

Mr. Chairman & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to ask you to support House Bill 98. I am sure you do not want the children in our state to go to bed hungry any more than I do. This bill is crucial to make sure that does not happen.

We served, in our Columbia Falls Food Bank, 2,741 families in 2012 in which 2,436 of those were children. This is a big increase over 2011.

I remember helping a young mother out to her car with her food and while she was thanking me, her little boy was going through the bag. All of a sudden he became very excited and hollered "Mommy, can we really have eggs?". Can you imagine how that mother felt? I have also seen moms cry and dads coming for help because he didn't know what else to do, his family needed food.

All children should be able to start the day with a good breakfast and know there will be food on the table at night.

Please support and pass House Bill 98!

Sincerely,



Jan VonLindern

Director

Columbia Falls Food Bank