

January 21, 2013

The Honorable David Howard, Chairman
House Health and Human Services Committee
Montana House of Representatives
PO Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620-0400

RE: Support for HB 98 and HB 99

Dear Chairman Howard and Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee:

On behalf of RiverStone Health, Yellowstone County's public health organization, I urge your support of both HB 98 and HB 99, bills that would measurably assist to curb food insecurity for the nearly 90,000 children in our state who on many days of the week wonder when they will eat their next meal. These bills are the result of the Children, Families, Health and Human Services Interim Committee's study of Childhood Hunger.

Specifically, HB 98 provides funding to start new School Breakfast Programs as well as funding to close the gap in cost (\$.30) between Free and Reduced Price School Breakfast Programs thus allowing for low income children to consistently enjoy breakfast. HB 99 provides flexibly in appropriating TANF funds to support out-of-school food opportunities, such as the Backpack Program in Billings which provides food to low-income children for the weekends.

It is well documented that children who go to school hungry do not perform as well in school as their peers. These hungry children often have lower math and reading scores, have increased school absenteeism and are more likely to be tardy, suffer from aggression, anxiety and other behavioral problems in the classroom. Getting children off to a good start by making sure their food needs are met, improves math, reading and standardized test scores. An investment in childhood food insecurity is an investment in the future workforce of our state.

Thank you for your consideration in supporting HB 98 and HB 99. Passage of these bills will help close the gap on childhood hunger in Montana. I look forward to working with you on this and other important health measures. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at barbara.sch@riverstonehealth.org or 651-6420.

Sincerely,

Barbara J. Schneeman, Director
Communication & Advocacy

Cc: Representative Pat Noonan, Sara Andersen, committee secretary