

January 23, 2013

Chairman Ehli and members of the Committee.

To introduce myself - my name is Susan Pesta and I am "Justin's mom"

Justin is 35 years old and has sufficient 'special needs'. He is receiving residential, vocational and social support services from West Mont. Their staff are awesome! As a parent it is comforting to know your child is living and working in a safe environment; with staff looking out for his best interests.

"Historic" financial increases for Service Providers, for individuals with developmental disabilities, made a difference for this special needs population in Montana. While disappointed the legislative session (2011) reduced reimbursement to Providers - back to the funding rates they received in 2009, I am asking you support Governor Bullock proposal to increase Medicaid dollars for the disabled and Providers caring for this population.

As a veteran employee (29 years) at West Mont, I am familiar with the rising costs of not only mandatory employee related expenses, but also the salary that is required to retain good staff. Also to consider is the increased cost of food, residential maintenance, non reimbursable training, etc. Past financial support for Providers made a difference by allowing providers to increase wages, retain qualified staff, and keep up with those employee related expenses like workers' comp., the rising costs of health insurance, and other benefits. We want to get back on this path.

Lastly, we know there is not an unlimited pot of money. Our agency is very committed to providing the best possible service to individuals with disabilities, like my son. The last twenty years West Mont has been developing alternative funding for our programs. We fundraise for additional dollars, and while our community is supportive, it does not offset the total dollars we will need to continue at the level we are now.

Thank you.

I would also like to invite you to take a tour of our facilities and meet some of our consumers and staff. You will see firsthand the vulnerability of this population as well as the need to receive adequate funding to maintain quality vocational and residential programs.

Sincerely,

Suisan Pesta
West Mont
Vice President - Client / Agency Relations
spesta@westmont.org
406-447-3122

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