

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

a. My name is Andrea Fox. I am an attorney here in Helena with the Utick Law Firm.

b. I am a member of Helena Industries Board of Directors, which is a volunteer board

c. I serve on the board because Helena Industries is a wonderful organization doing great work for the community; and, closer to my heart, my sister is an inspiring and dynamic woman, who also happens to be developmentally disabled. Kim has worked at Helena Industries for 23 years, and is so proud of what she does at Helena Industries.

2. Statement about Helena Industries

a. Helena Industries is a private, non-profit organization that was established in 1970. Over our 42-year history, our mission has been to serve the vocational and case management needs of individuals with developmental and other disabilities. **In a year's time, we serve approximately 860 individuals with disabilities.** That is almost 9 times the number of people in Montana's House of Representatives.

b. But, what **Helena Industries really does is to provide opportunity, choice, and dignity to those with developmental disabilities.** We live in a society in which work and employment are highly valued. I am sure you can think of someone, perhaps even you, who is defined by their job. When we first meet a person, one of the first questions usually asked is "What do you do?" Helena Industries is proud to say that, over the last four decades, we have provided literally thousands of disabled people with answers to these questions that they can be proud of. My sister grins from ear to ear when she states how long she has worked in the Helena Industries mail room. She almost seems to grow a little taller when she speaks of this accomplishment.

c. Services provided by Helena Industries are needed by the individuals with disabilities who we serve and are valued by the state of Montana. **In Montana, we watch out for our own, especially the disabled.**

3. Now, down to the nitty gritty: Money.

a. Two years ago, we reported to the subcommittee that HI was losing large amounts of money due to the inadequate rate system that reimburses it for services.

b. **Our losses in fiscal year 2010 were \$247,985. In fiscal years 2011 and 2012 losses were \$233,201 and \$193,136 respectively.**

c. We have worked steadily and made painful cuts in our attempts to stay afloat. We have:



- i. Eliminated retirement program for employees;
- ii. Reduced the health insurance benefits for employees;
- iii. Reduced paid time off for employees;
- iv. Had to let 3 employees go;
- v. Made no staff pay raises in 5 years;
- vi. Used nearly all of our modest fund reserves;
- vii. Deferred over \$300,000 in maintenance and equipment replacement costs; and

viii. Worked hard to generate revenues to offset losses. We opened the Helena Industries Thrift Store, and it has been a huge success. In fact, all of the clothing I am wearing today, and all the clothing I wear to Court is always from Helena Industries Thrift Store. We have also started a great new fundraiser, and this year we held the first annual Zombie Escape Run.

4. We have done all we can to help ourselves, and we can't cut any more without disadvantaging the people with developmental disabilities who we serve.

a. **We greatly appreciate the 2% rate increases** each year of the biennium that are proposed in the Governor's budget. This is a step on the right direction.

b. **However, we need a 14% rate increase just to "break even" on our services for people with developmental disabilities.** We need a rate increase that averages 14% across the biennium. And, we need your help to make that happen.

5. Thank you so much for your time today, and throughout the session. Also, I would like to extend a thank you from the Board of Directors: We thank the Montana Legislature for historically helping individuals with developmental disabilities.

Testimony given by:

Andrea J. Utick Fox
Utick Law Firm
1424 National Ave.
Helena, MT 59601
406-443-7250
andreautilsfox@gmail.com

