

Testimony before the
Senate Public Health, Welfare and Safety Committee
On HJ16 April 3, 2013

Senator Priest, members of the Committee for the record my name is Deborah Swingley; I am the Executive Director and CEO of the Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities.

I come before you today to strongly encourage your support of HJ16. This review outlined in HJ16 is greatly needed.

Imagine what strides in service delivery could be made from having the opportunity to look at what systems of care and infrastructure Montana really needs to serve people who experience mental illness, intellectual disabilities or chemical dependency.

The Council primarily works with individuals, and their families, who have intellectual disabilities, and those who are identified as having a dual diagnosis of an intellectual disability and a mental health issue through the existing community based service system, or in facilities such as the Montana Developmental Center and the Montana State Hospital.

But for the past two years, the Council has worked with a young man who has intellectual disabilities, and who resides at the Montana State Prison, and his family who live in another state.

From my many trips I've made to the Prison, I know first-hand the HUGE need for services that simply are not an option currently. This young man is not an isolated situation.

Although I do not have an exact figure, based upon the numbers of phone call we receive from inmates and their families at this facility, it must be a substantial percentage of the population.

HJ16 is the bill that will facilitate a serious review at what services we have, what services we need and bring forward those results to the 2015 Legislative Session.

I thank you for your time and am happy to answer any questions you may have.

