

EXHIBIT 5  
DATE 2-16-15  
# HB 451

February 12, 2015

Dear Sirs,

Our son Rob, now age 16, first attended school in BSD7 (Bozeman) at age 3. He is multiply handicapped, and qualified as a deaf AND blind child with the state of MT. He blindness/deafness was caused in large part by severe Sensory Integration Dysfunction... where the brain is not reading sensations from the senses correctly nor consistently, in Rob's case.

Rob started to see at age 3, and slowly developed infantile visual skills. His IEP made the decision to have him repeat 3 yr old pre-school, since a visual component could now be used to help him start to learn. Rob started to hear at age 4. He started to talk at age 4.5. He finally started to become aware of, and play with, other children during his first year in Kindergarten. The IEP Team case manager brought up the idea of having Rob repeat K and pick up valuable social skills he was missing. The Team agreed and Rob was held back a second time.

Now a freshman in high school, Rob has a 6/11 birthday. He will turn 19 on approximately the last day of his junior year in high school. BSD7 bylaws will allow us to appeal his case to the school board to please allow Rob to enter his senior year as a 19 yr old, and graduate before he turns 20 yrs old. That sounds doable.

And yet... our reality is that since state law changed to NOT include children with special needs in high school until a later age... we have been pressured to have Rob SKIP a grade to "catch back up" to his peers... a ridiculous thought from any viewpoint except "law". One administrator wanted Rob to skip up TWO grades, stating to us that "it won't matter anyways". We disagree. Our son may not be bright by school measured standards, but he is brilliant in his own unique areas, and he has a solid peer support system that has grown up with him through elementary school, middle school and high school. As his parents, we were stunned and amazed when our son received incredibly loud applause as he received his 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation certificate. It would be a loss for HIS peers for them to graduate without him. It may be a loss to society if Rob needs that extra school year to explore and find his best job skills that suit his very unique self and the workplace.

Please give Rob and others like him the little extra time they need to succeed in society and the workplace?

Thank you -  
Rob's mom, Cindy Bruckner  
Bozeman, MT



My name is Alison Bowers

I am a project SEARCH intern. Project Search is important to me because of the people that I work with. Project Search has helped me learn how to do different tasks. I like Project SEARCH because of all of the nice people that work in PT. I work in the PT department. I have learned how to put CPM's together, how to do the temp checks, stock the cupboards, deliver kits to people that are getting surgery and tidying up the areas. I also take gait belts to the ER and to ICU and to the medfloor and to the 2nd floor.

Alison Bowers  
Project Search Intern



My name is Charity Mortenson. I am a Mormon missionary Intern only from this year from Project SEARCH. I love Project SEARCH because I have learned a lot and it has helped me in the classroom about budget, social skills, organizing, employability skills & responsibilities. Examples: professionalism, following directions, communication, hand washing, teamwork and others that are MOST Important. Information about whether you think you can or think you can't. Look at your reflection and say positive thoughts like: I am worthy, I Respect Myself, I am ready for this new opportunity and others. I am in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. I work in the Family Birth Center and learn basic things that are important like saying HI & Bye when you work & leave your work. I also am learning how to stock Pods, IV Fluids bags and blankets, delivery rooms, clean & stock showers, make patients neat & clean beds, clean baby cribs, put together packets, charts, pass & retivate lunch trays, sort dirty scrubs in AM and PM, check and clean & spray instruments and do a tidy walkabout.

Charity is encouraged to learn from Project SEARCH and jobs you like & love to learn.

Sincerely,  
Charity Mortenson



Project SEARCH has helped me be a fast learner and learn how to do my job. I like being in Project SEARCH because I get to get out of the house every day. It makes me feel great and excited. It is fun to see new places and meet new residents at Hillcrest. In my first rotation I learned how to lead yoga, chair exercises, set-up for nail care, answer phones at the front desk, help with I-Play, lead Name that Tune, make copies and file papers. In my second rotation I am learning how to set tables, make coffee and pour water for residents. I am learning teamwork, how to have good appearance and have a "Yes I can" attitude. My goal is to get a part time job at the end of Project SEARCH!

Molly Wyatt  
Project SEARCH Intern



## Project Search

As the parents of a young woman with a disability we have seen Project Search provide incredible mentoring and opportunities to learn. Our daughter is not only acquiring new and valuable skills but she is realizing that she is capable and can become a valued employee in the work force. The high expectations and support offered by the job coaches and mentors of Project Search has allowed her to acquire these skills in a safe and supportive environment.

After leaving high school, these students too often face a void in which they are unable to succeed because their education has ended but they are not prepared for the work environment. Job coaching is often hard to come by and if they do have a coach, the time allowed is inadequate. This leads to misunderstanding on the part of the employer and frustration for the disabled employee. Project Search is an incredible solution to this predicament that students and family must negotiate. We sincerely hope in the future that Project Search will be available to young people state wide.

Please support the bill that will allow students with disabilities to stay in school until the age of 21. It is disheartening to know that Montana is one of only two states who do not support their young people in this way. Project Search is a wonderful example of how we can help individuals to have success and meaningful employment in their lives.

Catherine and Greg Caracciolo  
1015 Damarell Road  
Bozeman, MT 59718

February 11, 2015

To the Montana Legislature:

I am the parent of a 26-year-old young woman with special needs. When my daughter, Alison, was a senior in high school my husband and I met with the high school principal to ask if it would be possible for our daughter to stay in school beyond her "senior year" so that she could gain more life skills, social skills, and general knowledge to help her navigate the big world outside the confines of home and her school. We were told that keeping her in school was not a possibility. We and our daughter were on our own to find resources to help her learn to live successfully, happily, and safely in our community. We felt as if we were falling off a cliff, but we somehow managed to help her through this amazing, frightening transition.

Now, after almost 8 years of trials, mistakes, safety issues, etc. Alison is an intern in the Project Search program here in Bozeman. This is a wonderful program full of positive ideas on healthful living, being a good employee, learning the value of hard work, striving to improve skills, and becoming a better community member. Had Alison had something like this program 8 years ago, we surely could have avoided some of the problems she encountered in trying to gain her independence .

There needs to be a formal program to continue the education of our special needs students - something to help bridge the gap between formal public education and being an adult with special needs striving to survive and thrive in our communities. Project Search can fill this gap! If students are allowed to continue in the education system, learn independent living skills, job skills, nutrition, taking care of their health, learning the importance of exercise, honing their social skills, it is a win for all. The community gains a loyal, hard-working employee, the student improves their self-worth, and the state benefits by having the student learn skills to make them employable in their communities.

I implore you to fund programs for special needs students to continue their education beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday/senior year of high school. I find it very sad that Montana is one of 2 states that does not find it important enough to fund a program to continue the education process for these students with special needs.

Thank you.

Jan Bowers

815 Damarell Rd

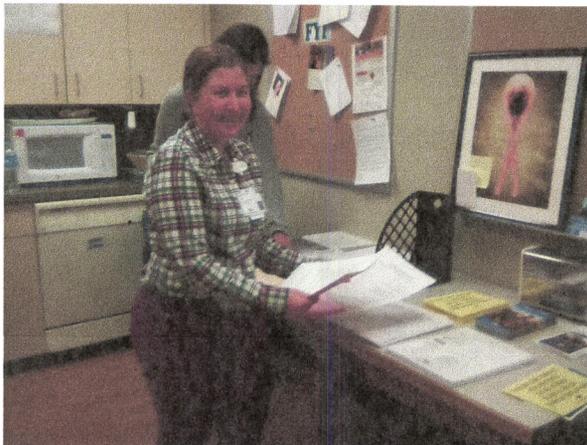
Bozeman, MT 59718

## Project SEARCH Emily Ruff's Story

Before becoming a Project SEARCH intern, I worked at Reach Inc. for two years. I worked on tying zippers for Mystery Ranch and worked really hard learning the skill and being social at the same time. Now that Project SEARCH has opened its doors in Montana I am able to work for long periods of time at Bozeman Deaconess Health Services.

I have learned new skills, gained new friends, and learned a lot of job related skills. For example appearance, teamwork, communication, social skills and how to prepare and give an interview. The departments I worked in for my internship so far has been with the Physical Rehabilitation Department, Human Resources, and the Cancer Center. After Project SEARCH I will work full time at Bozeman Deaconess Health Services. Without Project SEARCH I would be at home not earning a paycheck or learning new skills and having confidence in the workforce.

Emily Ruff  
Project SEARCH Intern



## Project SEARCH

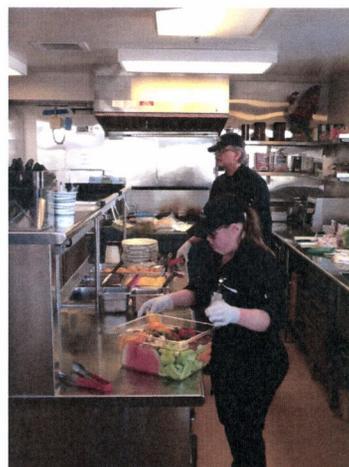
The first day Of Project SEARCH was September 2nd and I worked as a waitress at Birchwood and it was fun being with the residents. I learned very quickly. I did drinks and salads and soups and folding napkins and taking orders. Being with my coworkers like Tabitha, Amanda, Ashley, Hilary and Mary was fun!!!!

Now I am working in Hillcrest kitchen and I like it there and I like all of my coworkers. Their names are Ausman, Bruno, Andy, Max, Erica, Amy, Phil, Natalie, Jessica, Tia, Jesse, Matt, Rob, David and Margo. I am gaining a lot of skills. I prepare the salads, ice the salad bar, fold the napkins, set up the salad bars in Birchwood and Aspen point. I assist with setting up the food line and then I garnish the plates with fruit during lunch time. I plate the food, too, when someone teaches me. I wash some dishes. I assist with breaking down the salad bar. So I did all the skills and I am learning a lot.

Project SEARCH is fun and I love it so much!!!!  
I learned a lot of fun things like being healthy, communication, following Directions and professionalism. and I love it so much !!!!!

Thank you for your time and letting me share this with you.

Lucile Brunswick  
Project SEARCH Intern



Alyson Ball  
1103 S. Pinecrest Dr.  
Bozeman, MT 59715  
(406) 582-8566

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Alyson Ball and I am the proud mom of my 9 year old son, Ondrej, who is both medically complex and globally developmentally delayed. He is an incredibly empathetic and loving boy with a passion for science and building with LEGO bricks. He is the light of our family's life.

Ondrej was identified as having special needs officially at 4 months old and has been receiving services since he was 8 days old. This intensive intervention has allowed Ondrej to reach levels that would not have been remotely possible without it. The full wrap-around support of us as his family, the schools, and the community has been and will continue to be vital to his continued success and development. The principal at Ondrej's school once described him as "the poster child for the success of early intervention".

Seeing my child exceed expectations because of having been given the opportunity to start school at age 3 and receive extra time to work on skills, proves to me that when we invest in giving our students with disabilities a little extra time to achieve, it pays off majorly in the long run.

I also serve as President of the Bozeman Area Special Ed PTA and the number one most common complaint I hear about Montana's system of special education is that we are one of only 2 states in the nation that does not allow students with disabilities this crucial schooling between the ages of 19 and 21. As Montanans, we value the rights of each person to be able to achieve their dreams and contribute to our society as a whole. By giving our young adults with disabilities the chance to have two years at the end of their secondary education to focus on acquiring the skills they need to achieve their maximum potential, what we are really doing is greatly increasing their chances of being able to fully participate in all aspects of adult life and do something that is fulfilling and beneficial to their community. It is a very short period of financial investment that can and will completely change our kids' entire lives. Each person who gets a chance to envision their life as an adult and work on the skills they need to achieve that vision, is a person who is a lot less likely to drift aimlessly and end up sitting unfulfilled as their abilities and self-esteem fade away. Unfortunately, this is not even the worst fate that could await our children if they aren't given opportunity to succeed, as a hugely disproportionate number of them ultimately end up incarcerated. Not only does passing this bill make sense from a human dignity perspective but also from a financial one. It is certainly more fiscally responsible to provide these two years of education to head off potentially having to pay for someone to receive care for their entire life because they were denied the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Thank you for your consideration of passing this all-important bill. I dearly love living in Montana and I can't wait to see our great state join the 48 states that already have this legislation in place saying that we support the rights of our young adults with disabilities to achieve their dreams.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alyson Ball". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amy VanDenburgh  
511 Flathead Ave.  
Bozeman, MT 59718  
(406) 600-5104

Dear Committee Members,

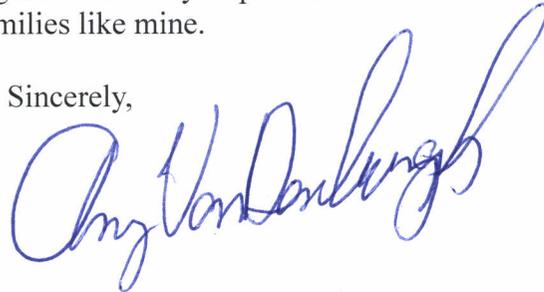
My name is Amy VanDenburgh and I am the proud mother of my 11 year old son, John, who is wheelchair bound from cerebral palsy and has developmental delays. I am a single mom and I am doing my best to give my son everything he needs to succeed in life, but I need help. He is physically dependent on others to help with almost all his daily tasks. School has been so valuable in helping him grow and learn. It takes kids like John more time to reach their potential because of the challenges they face everyday.

John is a very hard worker and loves to please people and will go out of his way to help anyone. He has the ability to be a great asset to our community. He just needs a chance to develop the skills that will allow his natural talents to shine.

At age 19, John will still be growing physically and he will need those extra years to continue to gain independence with his movement so that his body's limitations don't hold back the tremendous potential of his amazing mind and keep the community from benefiting from all he has to offer.

Thank you for your consideration of passing this extremely important bill. Please remember that your vote is directly impacting the future of families like mine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amy VanDenburgh". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "A".



# Bozeman Deaconess

## HEALTH SERVICES

### Memo

**To:** Montana Legislature

**CC:** Christy Sofianek, Program Coordinator, MT Project Search

**From:** Rick Harden, Director of Human Resources



**Date:** 11 February 2015

**Re:** Project SEARCH Testimony

Bozeman Deaconess Health Services is proud to host the first Project SEARCH in the State of Montana. We initiated the project in September of 2014 in collaboration with: Helena Industries Case Management (HICM); the Gilhousen Family Foundation; the Taishoff Center for Inclusive Higher Education; the Down Syndrome Research, Education and Advocacy in MT; Reach, Inc.; Montana DPHHS Vocational Rehabilitation and Developmental Disability Program; and Paul Brunswick.

We have six interns who have and are rotating through Rehabilitation Services, Human Resources, Cancer Center, Sterile Processing, Family Birth Center, Birchwood Dining Room and Programs, and Hillcrest kitchen. Our experience has been nothing but exceptional. You will be provided information on the benefit to the young adults participating in the program and to business. In my opinion, the information will most likely be understated. We have witnessed dramatic growth in our interns in such areas of independence, social relationships, and self-confidence. They are eager to come to work; eager to learn; and have made many new friends. However, the aforementioned is only half of the story. The positive effects on our staff have been amazing. Each intern has been welcomed with open arms; immersed completely in each work group; and has contributed surprisingly in each department with little disruption in operations. We even have two department managers who have identified one intern for full employment after the end of this year's program.

Bozeman Deaconess Health Services has no plans to eliminate this program and is actively planning on the expansion into other areas. This program has so much to offer applicable young adults that it needs to be expanded throughout Montana; supported by the Legislature; supported by School Districts; and supported by business.



**Bozeman Deaconess**  
**HEALTH SERVICES**

February 10, 2015

To: Montana Legislature  
From: Colleen Hatcher, Physical Rehabilitation Manager

Bozeman Deaconess Hospital has had the pleasure of bringing Project Search to Montana. This program allows interns with disability to work in a structured environment, learn new skills, complete quality checks and follow through in a work environment where they can eventually become employed and earn a wage. We have had 2 interns in our department that have learned new skills and advanced their abilities to become an engaged employee.

It is my understanding that Montana currently does not have the funding available for schools to allow disabled students to remain in class till age 21. The school districts would benefit greatly if they were allotted funding for student's age 19 to 21; allowing them to participate in the Project Search program at local hospitals or businesses.

The ultimate outcome of Project Search is to teach interns skills that will allow them to become employed individuals in this state. Please consider passing this legislative bill to allow funding for schools to assist students with disabilities. Project Search has been very successful in many states in this country and it deserves the support from our leaders.

Colleen Hatcher, PT  
Physical Rehabilitation Manager  
Bozeman Deaconess Hospital  
[chatcher@bdh-boz.com](mailto:chatcher@bdh-boz.com)  
406-414-1660

I am the manager of the Family Birth Center at Bozeman Deaconess Health Services. Since September we have had a Project SEARCH Intern in our department performing the duties of an aide. Both Mikaela and Charity have been successful in their work. However, the most value they have added to our department's high morale and joy. They come to work excited to work. Our staff love seeing their smiles. We have had premature babies born, and the parents have bonded with these interns, probably because they see that those who have disabilities can and do contribute to our department in work and spirit.

One young mother of a very premature baby brought her baby back to the hospital for "show and tell" a couple weeks after discharge. Our nurses and Mikaela, our SEARCH intern, gathered around the mom and baby to "ooo" and "ah". Then Mikaela said, "My, she has grown!" The mother got tears in her eyes. "Yes, Mikaela, she has." That first time mom has told her friends all over town how much it meant to her to see Mikaela again, and how Mikaela EVEN noticed the small growth in her newborn.

Project SEARCH is worth every penny! I thank Christy and our Human Resources Department for allowing them to be with us! I would be happy to hire either of the interns we have had this year! And look forward to ALWAYS having a Project SEARCH intern in our department!

Susan Connell, RN

Dear Sirs and Madams,

I write to implore your consideration to join the mass majority of States in the U.S. that fund students with disabilities through age 21. My center currently has the privilege and pleasure to have a young adult working with us, through the Project Search Program. This young person is truly an asset to our clinic. She is cheerful, attentive, capable of learning needed tasks quickly, and is genuinely proud to be making a contribution in our workplace. My staff and I have been greatly impressed with her capabilities and work ethic, and we are exploring how we might hire her to work with us after she finishes her Project Search internship rotations. This delightful young person is only one of many throughout Montana, that I am certain given the chance, have the potential to become actively engaged, self-sufficient and valuable members of our Montana community. They need only the proper opportunity to flourish.

Most Sincerely,

Spencer D. Green, MS MBA(HA)

*Business Operations Manager*

Bozeman Deaconess Cancer Center

931 Highland Boulevard, Suite 3130

Bozeman, MT 59715

Tel: 406.414.1617

[www.bozemandeaconess.org](http://www.bozemandeaconess.org)

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a targeted case manager for adults with developmental or intellectual disabilities and I currently have three people on my caseload that are participating in Project Search and several more that have applied or wish to apply in the future. Project Search has given these wonderful people the opportunity to rise to the challenge and blossom in jobs that they and their families would have never thought possible a few short months ago. The internships specifically crafted for them have exposed those participants on my case load to many new opportunities and challenges; the internships are teaching them to operate as valued team members of a larger organization. Additionally, the classroom time is an excellent way for the interns to prepare themselves for their rotation, build self esteem, work on job etiquette, and basic job skills. The classroom also serves as a sounding board for the interns to problem solve and assist one another. It is my hope that this experience will be a launching pad for these individuals to jump into careers that they value, jobs that empower them, and employment that sustains them. Even in its fledgling first year, Project Search has become a valuable resource and opportunity. Please feel free to share my comments and experiences with those who can make Project Search a success throughout Montana.

Sincerely,

Nicole Edwards  
Helena Industries Case Management