

HOUSE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 16, 2015, 3 PM
ROOM 152

HB 472
REAUTHORIZE THE CHILD AND FAMILY OMBUDSMAN

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT
MONTANA ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIANS
ABIGAIL ST. LAWRENCE, LOBBYIST

The Montana Association of Christians (formerly the Montana Association of Churches, also known as "MAC") supports the passage of HB 309 and respectfully asks the House Judiciary Committee for a "do pass" recommendation. MAC is made up of individuals, congregations, and seven Christian denominations: the Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church (USA), Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, American Baptist Church, United Methodist Church, Disciples of Christ, and United Church of Christ. Child welfare, and particularly prevention of child abuse and neglect, is a top legislative priority for MAC. Therefore, MAC supports HB 472.

MAC supports legislation to protect children from parental abuse and abuse from others who are responsible for their care. HB 472 makes permanent a position in the Department of Justice that can do just that: facilitate child protection and, as it states in Section 2(2) of the bill, "strengthen child and family services by working in collaboration" the Department of Public Health and Human Services. HB 472 also provides the ombudsman with investigative powers that are key to future prevention. Through coordinated community action and learning from past experiences, we can together prevent future instances of child abuse and neglect.

MAC believes that Montana owes its children the best it has to give. HB 472 is action by the state to give our children the best protection we can offer. MAC respectfully urges this committee recommend a "do pass" on HB 472. Thank you.