

**YOUTH HOMES Inc** – 550 North California Street – P.O. Box 7616 – Missoula, MT 59807-7616

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**Presentation to Health and Human services Sub-Committee**

January 22, 2015

Youth Homes was founded in 1971 to serve the most vulnerable population, our youth. Youth Homes is dedicated to working with youth and families without the resources and reserves to address their needs.

Every day we serve an average of over 280 youth and their families in Missoula, Polson, Ronan, Kalispell, Hamilton and Helena.

We provide

- Emergency services and shelter and we are one of the contractors providing crisis response to families with SED. I need to mention the need for better rates for shelter if Montana is ever to have a healthy system for youth and families and address mental health crises.
- Therapeutic Group Care
- Foster Care and Adoptions for high needs youth and toward permanency
- In-Home Services to strengthen and/or reunite families and
- Transitional services as youth move toward adulthood

But I'm going to talk about "doing business" with the State...

So the State gives themselves "present law adjustments" which seems to be another word for "cost of living" – but not for us who serve the most vulnerable Montanans! We get to ask for rate increases and that sounds inflationary.

Let me use rates for therapeutic group care as just one example:

- Since 1995 the COLA totals 47.94%
- During that same time rates have been increased by only 23%
- This means a loss, against the COLA, \$86.99 per day per resident or \$32,000!

In that time we have absorbed, for example, a 350% increase in the costs for liability insurance and 370% in costs for employee health insurance.

Meanwhile we have been able to increase wages for key staff

- Line worker wages by 56%

- Therapist wages by 69%

Remember again that rates went up only 23% in this period.

We do appreciate the Governor's budget does propose 2% for each of the next two but, honestly, that just isn't enough so we are asking for relief and consideration of 4% increases for the these next two years.

Thank you for your service and know you are sacrificing much to serve Montana and other Montanans.

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