Dear Montana Department of Economic Affairs,
I have been the Meat and Seafood Manager at the Community Food Co-op in Bozeman for five years. My goal is to create a department that only sells Montana meat products. Currently, 85% of what I purchase are Montana born, raised and harvested animals. This would be extremely difficult if I wasn't able to process at a local, State inspected processing facility. On average, I have 170 cows, 500 hogs, 50 lambs, 15 goats and hundreds of local chickens processed every year at State inspected facilities and this number will continue to increase as our business grows. Using a State inspected facility allows me to purchase directly from my local farmers and ranchers within a range of 100 miles. If I didn't have the State inspected facility, we would have to start purchasing meat from a national box beef, pork and lamb program. This would harm our local farmers and ranchers that depend on stores like the Co-op to make a living. There is a lot of money, spent right here in Montana that would be lost. Thank you so much for taking the time to read my letter. I am very passionate about supporting local Ag in my home State of Montana.
Best to you all,
Wyatt Nelson

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS
SEPTEMBER 14, 2017
EXHIBIT 8

B&L SCALES

09/13/2017

Montana Department of Economic Affairs

B&L Scales is a small, 40 year old, family business. We sell and service scales and meat processing equipment and supplies throughout Montana and Wyoming. Several times a year we visit each and every meat processor in the state. Our business and the four Montana families that we represent, depend on Montana Meat Processors for our livelihood.

Over the last several years we have witnessed a drastic decline in the effectiveness of the Montana meat and poultry inspection program and the relationship between program employees and the meat processors they are supposed to be working with to ensure Montana consumers receive quality, safe meat products.

We are gravely concerned that the meat and inspection program is in jeopardy of being shut down. Without it, dozens of Montana meat processors will be put out of business or severely curtailed in their business. Many beef and pork producers will lose the ability to market their products directly to the consumer. Our family business will be severely crippled. The negative economic effect on Montana will be in millions of dollars lost.

Anything that you can do to help fix and maintain the Montana Meat and Poultry inspection program will be greatly appreciated by Montana beef , pork, and poultry producers, the processors who work with them, the companies like ours who supply them, and the consumers who enjoy a wide variety of safe and tasty products.

We would be glad to provide additional input on what we see happening, if so desired.

Sincerely,

John Nikki

John & Nikki McFerran
B & L Scales, Inc
351 Scott St
Billings, MT 59101
406-248-4531

B BAR RANCH

May 18, 2017

Mr. Mike Honeycutt
Executive Officer
Montana Department of Livestock
Public Information Office
PO Box 202001
Helena, MT 59620-2001

Dear Mr. Honeycutt,

I have been the manager of The B Bar Ranch near Big Timber for the last 34 years. In 2004 we decided to change our marketing strategy from selling live cattle that were sent to feedlots in other states for finishing to a program where we sell beef directly to Montana consumers. We began selling beef to retail stores in 2005 on a small scale and have worked diligently to grow our business since then. Initially our beef processor was Big Timber Meats, a state inspected facility in Big Timber. Later prior to the closing of operations at Big Timber Meats, we began having our processing done by Pioneer Meats in Big Timber. I should mention that we sell almost exclusively Organic Beef which is certified organic by the Montana Department of Agriculture Organic Program. When we started our beef program there were 2 full time employees on the ranch. Over time as the business grew we were able to add employees and in 2017 we have 5 full time employees on our payroll. It has taken a long time to learn enough of the nuances of the beef business in Montana to be able to deliver fresh and frozen products across much of Montana each week to large and small retailers and individual customers. As far as I know we are the only small Grass Fed and Grass Finished operation in the state that slaughters cattle for beef sales 52 weeks a year. We are only able to survive if we can maintain a close relationship with our processor to adjust our supplies and product lines to match seasonal demand through the year.

Our business is completely dependent on the viability of the Montana Meat Inspection program and if it fails our future in the beef business will be in peril. I am not well informed on the particular details of the turmoil that is going on in the Montana Meat and Poultry Inspection Bureau but I am aware that our jerky products that have been developed over the past several years and which we have positioned for a major sales effort this year have been adversely affected by an order that states "all Montana establishments producing jerky under state inspection are required to stop production of jerky immediately". What I don't understand is how the Montana Meat and Poultry Inspection Bureau failed

to monitor jerky production for the past several years sufficiently to notice a deficiency that is serious enough to warrant that all jerky production in state inspected establishments must be halted.

Something is very wrong here and I am deeply concerned that the program that I have relied on for many years to help my processors ensure that we are selling safe and wholesome product has either failed to do their job properly the past several years or has changed standards recently in a way that requires a cessation of jerky production rather than a transition to new standards.

We and our customers rely on the assurance of the safety of our products from the Montana Meat and Poultry Inspection Bureau and the integrity of our processors. This action reflects poorly on the integrity of the program and is a threat to us and the many other ranches in the state that rely on the program to assure safe and wholesome products are being offered for sale in Montana.

Can you please tell me what measures you intend to take in the very near future to repair the reputation and practices of the Montana Meat and Poultry Inspection Bureau?

Sincerely,

Wes Henthorne

Wes Henthorne, Manager

B Bar Ranch
1273 Otter Creek Road
Big Timber, Montana 59011
(406) 932-4197