



Legislative Finance Committee  
Oct. 4, 2017  
Exhibit 19



Legislators and state government have a responsibility to invest public dollars in those programs and services which result in the greatest health improvement at the lowest cost. The Governor, at the advice of the Department, has proposed the elimination of some of our most high-value services in dentistry; that is, they eliminated services that are both CHEAP and dramatically reduced disease. In one instance, they eliminated a service that costs less than \$20 and reduce tooth-decay by 50%. The really remarkable thing is that they left intact services that arguably have little - to no - ability to reduce disease at all, and are expensive.

In fact, the Department never consulted anyone with a dental degree in the elimination of services. Because they do not have clinical expertise in dentistry, they should have taken the

Montana Dental Association's offer to work with them to develop a package that invests taxpayer dollars wisely.

Lastly, on a very personal level, I wanted you to know the proposed dental cuts are devastating for Montana's most helpless population.... the old and sick living in nursing homes. Specifically, dentures for this population have been eliminated. Withholding teeth from people who are old and sick, and completely helpless and dependent on you for everything, is cruel and inhumane. Cutting dentures from this population means slowly starving to death. You can't even begin to imagine what life is like in a nursing home.... left there.... forgotten by your family. And what is being proposed, not only slowly starves the old and sick, but deprives them of the one joy they have left.... the pleasure of eating their pot roast and green beans.

Many of them have existing dentures. In fact, the picture in front of you is Mary Ellen. She has worn her dentures for over 60 years. She hardly takes them out. But when she takes them out to clean them, sometimes her hands don't hold things quite as well anymore and they slip. The dentures drop and one of them breaks. Under this proposal, Mary Ellen will never eat again like she's accustomed to for over 60 years. So besides not smiling big like she is in that picture, she'll also slowly lose weight and nutrition, and die a long drawn-out death.

Additionally, many of these patients due to Alzheimer's, traumatic brain injuries, or developmental disabilities require protective stabilization in order to provide care safely. This low-cost service has been eliminated too. So in order to provide care to them, the only option is to transport them to a hospital and give them anesthesia. There's no more expensive way to deliver this care.

You won't see any of them up here testifying. These are people who can't even remember their children or spouse's names anymore. All of us need to think strongly about the ethics of knowingly causing suffering and sickness in a person who is so helpless and dependent on you.