



Children, Families, Health and Human Services Interim Committee

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56th Montana Legislature

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Richard A. Crofts
Commissioner of Higher Education
2500 Broadway
Helena MT 59620-3101

Dear Commissioner Crofts:

On August 17, 2000, the Children and Families, Health, and Human Services Legislative Interim Committee received the Montana Dental Action Plan from the Montana Dental Access Coalition. The Committee has supported and participated in the activities of the Coalition and wishes to make recommendations to you based on this work.

The Committee has endorsed the Commissioner of Higher Education's budget request to increase the funding of dental opportunities for Montana students in the WICHE and University of Minnesota dentistry schools by three slots each year. It is vital that access to dental providers for the future be addressed as the current dental providers age and head towards retirement. Increasing access to these educational opportunities will provide assistance to Montanans who seek to join the dental profession and provide dental care in the future.

The Committee has also endorsed encouraging the Board of Regents of Higher Education to re-establish a school of dental hygiene in the state. Montana is currently the only state in the nation without a program. Dental hygiene services are in high demand and provide education and prevention services that would mitigate the access crisis. Dental hygiene is a career that would enable Montanans to find employment in the state following graduation which would positively affect the dental care shortage.

Sincerely,

Senator Mignon Waterman, Presiding Officer

cc: Governor Racicot
Cheri Seed, State Dental Health Consultant, DPHHS

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