



Children, Families, Health and Human Services Interim Committee

PO BOX 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706
(406) 444-3064
FAX (406) 444-3036

56th Montana Legislature

SENATE MEMBERS

MIGNON WATERMAN, PRESIDING OFFICER
DALE E. BERRY
EVE FRANKLIN
BOB KEENAN

HOUSE MEMBERS

LOREN L. SOFT, VICE PRESIDING OFFICER
BOB LAWSON
TRUDI SCHMIDT
CAROLYN SQUIRES

COMMITTEE STAFF

SUSAN BYORTH FOX
RESEARCH ANALYST
DAVID NISS
STAFF ATTORNEY
LOIS O'CONNOR
SECRETARY

Board of Regents of Higher Education
2500 Broadway
Helena MT 59620-3101

Dear Chairman Davison:

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 the Board of Regents of Higher Education based on this work.

The Committee encourages the Board of Regents of Higher Education to pursue re-establishing 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.

The Committee has also 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.

Sincerely,

Senator Mignon Waterman, Presiding Officer

cc: Governor Marc Racicot
Richard A. Crofts, Commissioner of Higher Education
Cheri Seed, State Dental Health Consultant, DPHHS

C12255 0249sfxc.