

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 22
INTRODUCED BY W. JONES

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN APPROPRIATE INTERIM COMMITTEE TO STUDY REPAYMENT PROGRAMS AND OTHER INCENTIVE PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT ACCESS TO DENTAL CARE IN THE STATE, WITH EMPHASIS ON RURAL AREAS.

WHEREAS, access to a dentist in the rural or sparsely populated areas of Montana is difficult or nonexistent; and

WHEREAS, Montana's population of practicing dentists is growing older and concern exists in the dental profession in Montana that the supply of dentists is not being replenished; and

WHEREAS, it is anticipated that a large percentage of Montana dentists currently practicing will retire or reduce practice in the coming decade, severely restricting many Montanans' access to dental care; and

WHEREAS, Montana has no dental school of its own and must rely upon dental programs at other out-of-state educational institutions to provide Montana with graduate dental students; and

WHEREAS, for the medical profession, the state has created the Montana Rural Physician Incentive Program and the Montana Family Practice Residency Program, but no similar programs exist to bring new dentists into the state; and

WHEREAS, the University of Washington Dental School proposes a regional dental educational program entitled "the Regional Initiatives in Dental Education (RIDE) program" for Montana students; and

WHEREAS, proponents of the RIDE program request funding for the program from the State of Montana; and

WHEREAS, there is a need to determine whether requiring students who receive funding from the program to repay all or a portion of the funds or creating other incentive programs may increase access to dental care within the state by attracting and retaining dentists.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to study and make recommendations on issues

regarding:

(1) initiatives to increase the supply of dental care professionals, especially in rural and underserved areas in Montana;

(2) programs that require students who receive educational support through the Regional Initiatives in Dental Education program to repay all or a portion of the funds appropriated by the State of Montana for their education; and

(3) dental loan forgiveness programs administered through the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the committee request participation in the study by the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, the Office of Economic Development, the Department of Labor and Industry, the Department of Public Health and Human Services, and representation from dental health professionals.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be presented to and reviewed by an appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2008.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions, comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 61st Legislature.

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