

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 56
INTRODUCED BY D. SANDS

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY OF COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS AND THE WAYS IN WHICH THE STATE COULD EXPAND ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES THROUGH THE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER MODEL.

WHEREAS, approximately one-fifth of Montana's population has no public or private health insurance, ranking Montana fourth among the 50 states in the number of uninsured residents; and

WHEREAS, 37% of Montanans have incomes below 200% of the poverty level, making it difficult to purchase adequate health insurance; and

WHEREAS, about one-half of Montana residents live in areas that have been federally designated as medically underserved or health professional shortage areas; and

WHEREAS, Montanans who lack health insurance often fail to obtain preventive care and delay treatment for other medical problems, leading to greater costs when they do seek care; and

WHEREAS, Montana's 11 existing community health centers provide preventive, diagnostic, and treatment services to approximately 76,000 uninsured, underinsured, and underserved Montanans, with fees based on a patient's income; and

WHEREAS, urban Indian health clinics provide health care to another 25,000 Montanans; and

WHEREAS, the community health center model allows for flexibility in meeting the particular needs of residents in the area that the health center serves, whether that area is rural or urban; and

WHEREAS, 36 states already invest in community health centers as key components of their state health care system by providing significant financial support to the centers; and

WHEREAS, community health centers and urban Indian health centers hold the promise of providing critically important preventive and treatment services to uninsured, underinsured, and underserved Montanans.

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 how Montana could increase health care

services to its residents through the use of the community health center model.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the interim committee study the following matters:

- (1) the ways in which the state could coordinate its health care spending with federal, local, and private funds to increase the number of community health centers and the services that they offer in Montana;
- (2) the possibility of expanding health care services through the establishment of satellite offices of community health centers and the creation of federally qualified community health center look-alike facilities; and
- (3) the ways in which community health centers could be used to support and expand direct primary and preventive care for people who are without access to health care.

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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