

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR



MIKE COONEY
LT. GOVERNOR

April 18, 2019

The Honorable Greg Hertz
Speaker of the House
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

The Honorable Scott Sales
President of the Senate
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Speaker Hertz and President Sales:

In accordance with the power vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana, I do hereby veto House Bill 290 (HB 290), "AN ACT REQUIRING APPLICANTS FOR THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO COOPERATE WITH THE STATE CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM; AND AMENDING SECTIONS 39-51-403, 39-51-2208, 39-71-118, 40-4-215, 45-6-312, 50-49-103, 53-2-108, 53-2-201, 53-2-211, 53-2-606, 53-2-901, 53-2-902, 53-2-903, 53-2-904, 53-3-115, 53-4-601, 53-4-602, 53-4-609, AND 53-4-704, MCA."

House Bill 290 would require the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) to deny food assistance to low-income families unless child support payments were first sought by families in need. Over 38,000 Montana children live in food insecure homes. Montana families across the state rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for reliable access to healthy food. I do not support legislation that makes it harder for families to put food on the table and that denies food to children because of decisions made by their parents.

The implementation costs of HB 290 are significant—\$2.5 million in the first year and \$1 million every year thereafter. The United States Congress recently rejected inclusion of a similar provision in the Farm Bill. The Congressional Budget Office estimated the cost of implementing this policy nationally would far exceed any new child support payments collected. In fact, the costs of implementing HB 290 in Montana could feed 1,500 children a month over the next two years.

Montana law already allows the state to help families seek child support. House Bill 290 is unnecessary, costly and ultimately punishes children who deserve better.

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For these reasons, I veto HB 290.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Steve Bullock", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

STEVE BULLOCK
Governor

cc: Legislative Services Division
Corey Stapleton, Secretary of State