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**To:** [LEG Cmte-RVIC Comment](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment for EQC  
**Date:** Friday, July 16, 2021 10:18:52 AM

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# Public Comments for the Revenue Interim Committee

**Date:** 16th July 2021 10:18

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Mary Ann

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Dunwell

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**Subject:**

HJ 6 study

**Comment:**

Hello Chair Cohenour and members of the Revenue Interim Committee. I'm Representative Mary Ann Dunwell, House District 84 Helena/East Helena. As you pursue HJ 6 and study of the Coal Trust and natural resources revenue, please consider HB 646 from the 2021 session. HB 646, the "Montana and Tribal Governments' Coal Revenue Replacement and Fossil Fuel Worker Economic Security Act," was authored by two former Montana legislators, Russ Doty and Tom Towe. Senator Towe authored the Constitutional Coal Trust Act some fifty years ago and is considered the Father of the Coal Trust. Coal severance tax revenue pays for schools, water projects, infrastructure, libraries, parks, and other important programs. But, as you know, that tax revenue is decreasing as market demand for coal lessens. Renewable energy electricity has become cheaper than coal-generated electrons. As the world adopts renewable power, we'll need replacement revenue sources for the coal severance tax, coal gross proceeds tax, and coal royalties to sustain the communities, Tribal communities, programs, and projects now funded by that money. HB 646 uses some of the savings from the market transition to renewable energy to gradually replace the loss of coal tax dollars. It has the potential of generating \$140 million dollars a year by 2034. In HB 646, the replacement revenue also finances displaced coal worker pay and pensions, and development for energy-impacted communities. It will yield about \$955 million dollars for a pension safety net, job retraining, unemployment compensation, and mortgage assistance. Retraining would be available for more than 2-thousand Montana fossil fuel workers and more than 5-thousand others in coal-impacted communities disadvantaged by the transition to renewable power. This includes Tribal communities. Many Tribal members work at the mines or Colstrip facility. Under HB 646, consumers wouldn't notice the tax. In fact, consumers will notice savings on their energy bill because of the cost effectiveness of renewable energy. Even at the height of the tax phase in, they'll still realize at least a 15% savings. I believe that using dollars saved from more

economical renewable energy sources to replace dwindling coal dollars is much better than raising income or property taxes, or starting a sales tax to continue funding education and other necessary programs. HB 646 will reinforce the coal trust for future generations, help workers and communities transition to a sustainable future, and attract businesses to Montana because the cost of their energy will be less. Thus, creating jobs. Thank you for your consideration of HB 646 and my comments as you pursue HJ 6.

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