

## SECTION A PUBLIC COMMENT

**Saturday 1/30/2021**

Details:

Bill: HB-2: General Appropriations Act 2021-02-02 08:00 AM - (H) JAS on General Government

Position: Proponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: Yes

Organization: Bear Paw Development Corporation

Name: Paul Tuss

Email: [ptuss@bearpaw.org](mailto:ptuss@bearpaw.org)

Phone: (406) 265-9226

City, State: Havre, Montana

Written Statement: I strongly urge your favorable consideration of the budget that appears before you for the Montana Department of Commerce. The Department of Commerce has been a reliable, capable partner for on-the-ground economic development activities and projects since the inception of the department over three decades ago.

Specifically, I am writing to urge your support for the various programs at Commerce that consistently make a positive difference in the ability of organizations like Bear Paw Development Corporation here in Havre to impact the livability of the communities we serve and the viability of our region's business sector.

Two such programs include the Certified Regional Development Corporation Program and the Small Business Development Center Program. Both worthwhile programs have proven themselves to be particularly helpful in our rural area of northern Montana to assure that our nonprofit economic development organization has the capacity to help entrepreneurs with their small business planning needs and our local governments with their grant writing and management needs.

These programs are used every day in our region. Please support the Department of Commerce's budget proposal that you have been asked to consider.

Files:

Testify via Zoom: Yes

Zoom Method: Computer

**Monday 2/1/2021**

Details:

Bill: HB-2: General Appropriations Act 2021-02-03 08:00 AM - (H) JAS on General Government

Position: Proponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: Yes

Organization: Headwaters RC&D and Butte Local Development Corp.

Name: Rick Edwards

Email: [rick.edwards@northwestern.com](mailto:rick.edwards@northwestern.com)

Phone: (406) 782-2349

City, State: Butte, MT

Written Statement: Please see attached letter for full information.

Over the years, the suite of economic development programs have been extremely effective in increasing the economic vitality of the state of Montana. The programs provide a broad set of opportunities with which the local practitioners can work to retain existing businesses, expand existing businesses, and attract new businesses to the state. During 2020, these programs were extremely valuable in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Two key programs that were particularly effective were the CRDC program and the SBDC program. Both of the programs

were critical to providing the capacity necessary to assist customers, especially small businesses that were adversely impacted by the pandemic. Additionally, the Big Sky Trust Fund programs related to planning and workforce were and will continue to be very important as we recover from the pandemic.

Files: LegislativeSupport013121 Headwaters.pdf Testify via Zoom: No Zoom Method: N/A

January 31, 2021

House Appropriations Committee  
State Capitol  
Helena, MT 59601

Committee Members:

With this letter I am rising in support of the suite of economic development programs administered by the Montana Department of Commerce. I write this letter on behalf of Headwaters RC&D as its Board Chair and on behalf of the Butte Local Development Corporation as a member of its executive committee.

Over the years, the suite of economic development programs have been extremely effective in increasing the economic vitality of the state of Montana. The programs provide a broad set of opportunities with which the local practitioners can work to retain existing businesses, expand existing businesses, and attract new businesses to the state. During 2020, these programs were extremely valuable in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Two key programs that were particularly effective were the CRDC program and the SBDC program. Both of the programs were critical to providing the capacity necessary to assist customers, especially small businesses that were adversely impacted by the pandemic. Additionally, the Big Sky Trust Fund programs related to planning and workforce were and will continue to be very important as we recover from the pandemic.

In closing, I appreciate the support that you have provided to the economic developers across the state, and I encourage you to allow us to continue to execute the suite of programs administered by the Department of Commerce. Thanks for all you do to make Montana a great place to live, work, and play!

Sincerely,



Rick Edwards  
Headwaters RC&D and the Butte Local Development Corporation

Details:

Bill: HB-2: General Appropriations Act 2021-02-03 08:00 AM - (H) JAS on General Government

Position: Proponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: Yes

Organization: Butte local development corporation

Name: Joe willauer

Email: [jwillauer@bldc.net](mailto:jwillauer@bldc.net)

Phone: (406) 925-9622

City, State: Twin bridges

Written Statement: Not Provided

Files:

Testify via Zoom: Yes

Zoom Method: Computer

Details:

Bill: HB-2: General Appropriations Act 2021-02-02 08:00 AM - (H) JAS on General Government

Position: Proponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: Yes

Organization: Big Sky Economic Development

Name: Steve Arveschoug

Email: [stevea@bigskyeda.org](mailto:stevea@bigskyeda.org)

Phone: (406) 869-8401

City, State: Billings, MT

Written Statement: The Small Business Development Center plays a critical role in economic development in the State of Montana. Over the past year, in the nine counties that our Small Business Development Center covers (Yellowstone, Big Horn, Carbon, Golden Valley, Musselshell, Petroleum, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Wheatland), 279 clients have been served, 1,900 counseling hours have been logged, 858 jobs have been supported, and \$6,209,475 have been infused (loans/equity/grants).

From breweries to manufacturers, and retail establishments to automotive service companies, the State's investment goes a long way in helping small businesses thrive and navigate the resources they need. Take it from Pat Whitlock, Owner of Stillwater Tire located in Columbus who shared, "We were overwhelmed by the request of information needed to apply for an SBA loan. Your (SBDC team's) professionalism, prompt response to our request, and expertise are unsurpassed. Thank you for making what seemed to be a stressful process simple."

The SBDC's service to small businesses is made possible by federal, state, and local partners. The State's continued partnership is greatly appreciated.

Files:

Testify via Zoom: Yes

Zoom Method: Computer

Details:

Bill: HB-2: General Appropriations Act 2021-02-03 08:00 AM - (H) JAS on General Government

Position: Proponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: Yes

Organization: disability advocacy

Name: Shyla Patera

Email: [spatera@ncils.org](mailto:spatera@ncils.org)

Phone: (406) 452-9834

City, State: Black Eagle

Written Statement: Chair Bartel and members of the Joint Appropriations General Government committee: My name is Shyla Patera. I am an Independent Living Specialist employed by and who represents North Central Independent Living Services Inc. As a long time housing advocate, I can attest that the Housing Division has assisted Montana communities and our citizens with disabilities with numerous housing issues.

Files:

Testify via Zoom: Yes

Zoom Method: Computer

Details:

Bill: HB-2: General Appropriations Act 2021-02-04 08:00 AM - (H) JAS on General Government

Position: Proponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: Yes

Organization: Montana Cooperative Development Center

Name: Tracy McIntyre

Email: [tracy@mcdc.coop](mailto:tracy@mcdc.coop)

Phone: (406) 727-1517

City, State: Great Falls, MT

Written Statement: Please see the attached letter from Montana Cooperative Development Center in support of cooperatives and economic development programs for Montana.

Files: Support Letter of DOC Pograms 2-1-2021 MCDC.pdf Testify via Zoom: No Zoom Method: N/A



PO Box 3027  
Great Falls, MT 59403  
Tel: 406-727-1517  
[www.mcdc.coop](http://www.mcdc.coop)

February 1, 2021

Chairman Bartel  
Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

As part of the economic development community in Montana, we wanted to extend our support to the programs within the Department of Commerce. The cooperatives that we build often utilize the Small Business Development Centers and work closely with the Certified Regional Development Centers and local development organization. We also have a strong working relationship with the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center.

We recognize the value of the Department of Commerce and their programs they provide in our State. From funding loan and grant programs for housing, business development, workforce training, supporting Indian Country, and more we see the Dept. of Commerce as critical for the State as we rebuild, recover and thrive.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tracy McIntyre".

Tracy McIntyre  
Executive Director

Details:

Bill: HB-2: General Appropriations Act 2021-02-05 08:00 AM - (H) JAS on General Government

Position: Proponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: Yes

Organization: Montana West Economic Development

Name: Jerry Meerkatz

Email: [jerry@dobusinessinmontana.com](mailto:jerry@dobusinessinmontana.com)

Phone: (406) 257-7711

City, State: Kalispell, MT

Written Statement: Support for Dept. of Commerce programs

Files: MWED Testimony (H) JAS on General Government.pdf Testify via Zoom: No Zoom Method: N/A



January 28, 2021

Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government  
Montana House of Representatives  
PO Box 200400  
Helena, MT 59620-0400

Re: **HB-2** General Appropriations Act

(H) JAS on General Government,

I am the President of Montana West Economic Development (MWED) and the CEO of Flathead County Economic Development Authority (FCEDA) in Kalispell. I am in favor of continued funding for Montana's Economic Development Programs. Specifically, my company has benefited from Big Sky Trust Fund, Community Development Block Grant Program, MicroBusiness Finance Program, and the Montana Cooperative Development Center. These programs have allowed MWED and FCEDA to support job creation, business expansion, and new business development in Flathead County. Just last month, BSTF funding was awarded to support three local businesses in creating up to 50 new jobs. We manage \$2,939,000.00 in CDBG funding and \$400,000 in MicroBusiness funding that provides a revolving loan fund for financing local business growth. We partner with MDCDC to be a contact for local co-op development and explore opportunities to fill gaps by creating cooperative solutions. In addition, to the above-mentioned benefits, these programs provide an important tool for attracting new businesses to the area and providing solutions for local entrepreneurs. I can be available to testify via Zoom as needed. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jerry Meerkatz".

Jerry Meerkatz, President/CEO