

March 17, 2021

Dear Legislator:

Thank you for not only listening to requests in Section B for HB 2, but also now for researching the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and once again asking for public suggestions. I wanted to share requests for Section B as they pertain to the American Rescue Plan Act.

The American Rescue Plan Act is a once in a decade stimulus that could have far reaching positive effects on Montana's disability and senior providers. Easterseals – Goodwill and subsequently our clients have not fully recovered from the Special Session 2017 provider cuts. Add to those reductions the complexities of serving these vulnerable populations during a pandemic and one can understand why we are once again making these simple appeals. We serve 1,113 individuals with disabilities or disadvantages in a variety of ways ranging from day services and in-home healthcare to hospice and job training. We also employ over 460 staff in Montana.

Disabilities Employment Transitions Division (DETD) #1:

- 1) Repurposing of 7 FTE that were eliminated from the 2019 budget from other divisions in DPHHS.
- 2) \$800K biennial (OTO) for Extended Employment services. MTAP funding was made whole in HB2, but this also eliminated approximately \$400K annually from Extended Employment services.

DETD is what I refer to as the "Jobs" division. DETD's waiting list for clients wanting to work is 1,736 people. These clients need support in finding jobs, applying for jobs and maintaining jobs. This requires FTEs and by re-purposing 7 positions mentioned above the waiting list can be eliminated. Furthermore, Extended Employment services dovetail with Vocational Rehabilitation services and are a landing spot for those who have exhausted their VR eligibility but who still need support in keeping employment. If enacted, these workforce development requests will have long-lasting impressions for DETD so they can fulfill their mission of putting capable people to work!

Developmental Services Division (DSD) #10:

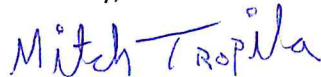
- 1) 2% and 2% provider rate increase in years 2022 and 2023. This provider rate increase would be OTO and expire on July 1st, 2026. Currently, thanks to this subcommittee's actions, providers stand to gain a 1% and 1% increase in HB2. This increase from ARPA would only last for 5 years and then would revert to the 1% and 1%. This would insure workforce development, recruitment and retention, along with improved and developed resources for the disabled and disadvantaged communities.
- 2) Annual CPI benchmarked COLA. This COLA would be OTO and expire on July 1st, 2026. Providers like Easterseals-Goodwill would not return every session asking for a provider rate increase. This unretractable COLA would be a 5-year solution to shoring up a home and community based system that delivers services of the utmost importance.

Senior Long Term Care Division (SLTC) #22 and Addictive and Mental Disorders (AMDD) #33:

- 1) 2% and 2% provider rate increase in years 2022 and 2023. This provider rate increase would be OTO and expire on July 1st, 2026. (Not applicable to hospitals as they receive funding from other means, as well.) Currently, thanks to this subcommittee's actions, providers stand to gain a 1% and 1% increase in HB2. This increase from ARPA would only last for 5 years and then would revert to the 1% and 1%. As heard again and again in section B subcommittee, this increase is warranted now more than ever during this pandemic. Montana's senior citizens and those suffering from mental disorders have been put in harm's way through no fault of their own and these exceptional populations deserve assistance.
- 2) Annual CPI benchmarked COLA. This COLA would be OTO and expire on July 1st, 2026. The reasons for this request are similar to #2 under DSD.

Finally, I want to say these are Easterseals – Goodwill suggestions only. This committee is tasked with ARPA appropriations and final decision making. It's been a whirlwind of a week! Thank you very much for your selfless service to the state of Montana and its citizens.

Sincerely,



Mitch Tropila

Public Policy Officer

Easterseals – Goodwill Northern Rocky Mountain

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