

Bill: HB-2: General Appropriations Act 2021-01-19 08:00 AM - (H) JAS on Health and Human Services

Position: Proponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: Yes

Organization: Montana Federation of Public Employees

Name: Lauren Caldwell

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City, State: Helena, MT

Written Statement: Chairman Regier and members of the committee, my name is Lauren Caldwell (L-A-U-R-E-N-C-A-L-D-W-E-L-L). I am here on behalf of the Montana Federation of Public Employees and the public educators and public employee members we represent across Montana, including those Montanans working for departments included in Section B of the budget.

Thank you all for the work you are doing on behalf of Montana's working families.

MFPE is in general support of the Governor's recommended House Bill 2 funding levels in Section B.

MFPE does have two requests as you conduct your work this session.

First, as you build upon your starting point decision last week, we request that this committee restore Section B funding to reflect House Bill 2 as introduced. Many critical services and personnel approved last session are not reflected in the current starting point budget.

Second, we ask that this committee reduce the proposed level of vacancy savings. A 4% vacancy savings is simply not warranted. Montana's budget will balance without forcing agencies to hold vacant positions and trim services to Montanans. At a time when major tax cuts are being proposed, along with a strong ending fund balance, Montana has the resources to fully fund the important public services the legislature authorizes.

Thank you.

Bill: HB-2: General Appropriations Act 2021-01-21 08:00 AM - (H) JAS on Health and Human Services

Position: Informational Witness

Representing an Entity/Another Person: No

Organization: N/A

Name: Dena Schoolcraft

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City, State: Great Falls

Written Statement: January 18, 2021

To whom it may concern,

The budget for long term care and assisted livings is very important to the facilities out here providing care and services to our seniors and disabled. The budget necessary for the coming year is still with COVID-19 pandemic issues.

1) COVID-19 is still continuing to grip our state. We are still having shut downs, active cases and isolations and designated staffing. These costs are tremendous and only with relief from the Medicaid are we able to continue to provide the need services and support to those who test positive.

2) The positive cases are a major strain on small business resources and staff. The increased costs of PPE, isolation protocols, designated staffing, quarantining of exposed individuals, and keeping staff on board are all major issues to be addressed in continued support for our population when deciding on a budget and suggested cuts.

3) We would not still be able to provide the services greatly needed by assisted living if we did not get the increased daily rate. We have so many that are receiving services that are not addressed in setting the daily rate for Medicaid Waiver and the needs we are experiencing as residents fall to the COVID-19 infecting are outrageous.

4) Staffing in these times of isolation, contagion, and increased stress due to designation and resident dissatisfaction with all the rules and protocols for restricting them from family and friends has caused major turn over in staffing. Finding and keeping staff has always been an issue but increased stress and possible infection has made it next to impossible to find staffing.

5) If we had not received the increased rates for Medicaid Waiver, we would not be able to continue operating today. The increase costs of this pandemic have more than tripled our efforts for services and continued care for our residents.

Dena Schoolcraft
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