



January 26, 2021

Joint Appropriation Subcommittee for Health & Human Services
Montana State Legislature
Montana State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

RE: HB 2: Section B DPHHS – Addictive Mental Disorders Division

Good morning Chairman Regier and members of the Subcommittee:

For the record, my name is Stacey Anderson, Policy Director for the MT Primary Care Association. MPCA is the statewide membership organization for the state's federally qualified community health centers (FQHC) and four of Montana's Urban Indian Clinics (UIC). Combined, MPCA's members serve as the health home for over 122,000 vulnerable and underserved Montanans. Annually, Montana's FQHCs and UICs serve over 62,000 Montanans with a mental health or substance use diagnosis and provide over 220,000 visits annually to those patients.

First, we would like to thank the Department and staff for their presentation today. MPCA has long enjoyed a good working relationship with the staff and appreciates the hard work they do for the people of Montana.

FQHCs are key providers across the state, not only in the direct provision of behavioral health care, but also by providing training and technical assistance such as:

- increase the number of waived providers in the use of medication-assisted treatment;
- integrate substance use treatment and behavioral health into various medical settings;
- help providers understand the Fundamentals of Addiction; and
- Focus on opioid use disorder and methamphetamine use.

In general, we would like to express our support for Governor Gianforte's budget. We appreciate the work he and his budget director put into crafting a budget that supports the key programs managed by AMDD and expands critical services through the HEART Initiative.

We hope that this committee will work to bring Section B back into line with the Governor's budget from the starting point motion and strongly encourage the adoption of the Governor's HEART Initiative. Details around the impact of the Starting Point Motion are not clear to me and with a \$34 million impact in this particular division, I have concerns that decreases in this division will halt and even reverse some of the amazing work the state has been doing around mental health, substance use services, and suicide prevention.

MPCA appreciates the opportunity to comment. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stacey Anderson'.

Policy Director
sanderson@mtpca.org

Bill: HB-2: General Appropriations Act 2021-01-28 08:00 AM - (H) JAS on Health and Human Services

Position: Proponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: Yes

Organization: Summit Independent Living

Name: Travis Hoffman

Email: thoffman@summitilc.org

Phone: (406) 396-8159

City, State: Missoula

Written Statement: Dear Chairman Regier and Members of the Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Travis Hoffman and I currently live in Missoula, Montana. I am a person with a disability who uses or has used a number of public assistance programs including many which are offered by the Senior and Long-Term Care Division within DPHHS. I grew up in several small Southwest Montana towns and graduated high school from Twin Bridges. When I was just a junior in high school I enrolled in the United States Army Reserves, this was in 1996. While serving in the Army Reserves I worked in several different industries including the timber industry, the concrete industry, the retail industry, and also as a ranch hand. In the fall of 1999 I was involved in an automobile accident in which I sustained a spinal cord injury leaving me with no voluntary function of the lower three quarters of my body. As you can probably understand, none of the jobs I held in the past, not even the military, allowed me to save much to meet the needs of my newly found disability, one that I, nor anyone, expects to be confronted with. Obviously I could also no longer perform the functions of the jobs I was trained in and knew how to do.

While the long-term care services, such as personal assistance services, that I receive through DPHHS allowed to survive and continue to enable me to have a life, it was services such as independent living and vocational rehabilitation that provided me with the necessary tools I needed to navigate the world of disability to get to where I am today. When I was released from the hospital after my accident I really had no idea what I wanted to do. Getting involved in independent living allowed me the opportunity to learn more about my new disability as well as to meet others with similar disabilities and experts who have helped me throughout the years to navigate and learn about programs such as Medicaid, Social Security, and other convoluted programs that people with disabilities must encounter as they work to get back on their feet and move towards independence and self-sufficiency.

Without these services I would not have had the opportunities I have since acquiring my disability. Those opportunities include working with Vocational Rehabilitation to attend the University of Montana to become a social worker since I could no longer perform the jobs that I used to and becoming a full-time employee and working my way off of several public assistance programs such as SNAP, section 8 housing assistance, low income energy assistance, and even Social Security.

Many social service programs are aimed at helping individuals with disabilities acquire benefits by assisting them to apply for and getting on programs such as Medicaid, Social Security, Medicare, and others to ensure that their immediate needs are met. These are crucially important to ensure that people with disabilities are able to survive but the programs you are hearing about today, Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living, go a step further in that they give individuals the necessary tools to begin taking responsibility and control over their own lives and teaching them the skills they need to become active, participating members of their communities.

These programs, if funded appropriately and designed effectively, allow for people to live as independently as possible so that they may have an opportunity to become taxpaying, contributing members of our communities who are less dependent on other public assistance programs and who may someday work their way upwards and off of assistance altogether.

Thank you for your time and I am hopeful that you see the importance of each of these programs under and realize that each is a great investment for the State of Montana and each plays a part in the long-term goal of allowing individuals with disabilities to develop the social, employment, and self-care skills they need to be productive members of society.

Travis Hoffman
1430 Eaton St.
Missoula, MT 59801

Bill: HB-2: General Appropriations Act 2021-01-28 08:00 AM - (H) JAS on Health and Human Services

Position: Proponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: Yes

Organization: North Central Independent Services Inc.

Name: Shyla Patera

Email: spatera@ncils.org

Phone: (406) 452-9834

City, State: Black Eagle

Written Statement: My name is Shyla Patera. I am an independent living specialist employed by North Central Independent Living Services, Inc. in Black Eagle, Montana. I am also a Montanan with a disability who has utilized both disability employment and transition services through this division. DETD Staff provided me with a chance to fund college tuition and attend Montana State University in Bozeman in the late 80s and early 90s. I received my Bachelor of Arts in Political Science at Montana State University! provided me a great spring board to pursue full-time employment at North Central Independent Living Services..DETD and its partnerships have helped young adults in Montana gain needed skills and access to assistive technology to pursue employment opportunities. Montana's independent living centers, including North Central Independent Living Services Inc. provide needed supports as people pursue community living in our Montana communities.

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Position: Opponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: No

Organization: N/A

Name: Mark Cash

Email: cash1313man@bresnan.net

Phone: (406) 552-7640

City, State: Missoula

Written Statement: I just want to let you know how important programs such as Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living, MYLF, and the Montana Telecommunications Access Program are to people with disabilities. These are crucially important programs that help to ensure that people with disabilities have the necessary tools to take responsibility and control over their own lives and learn the skills they need to become active, participating members of their communities.

Bill: HB-2: General Appropriations Act 2021-01-28 08:00 AM - (H) JAS on Health and Human Services

Position: Proponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: No

Organization: N/A

Name: Justice Ender

Email: justiceender@gmail.com

Phone: (406) 926-9210

City, State: Missoula, MT

Written Statement: Independent living remains one of the only service models that leaves power in the hands of the individual. These services should be funded so Montanans can receive services and support to live independently in the community of their choice.

Vocational Rehabilitation is the only program that provides a specific subset of services necessary for many people with disabilities to be able to navigate the myriad of legal and other barriers that might limit or prevent work. As the private sector continues to be hostile to the employment of people with disabilities, VR is necessary to provide training and support so that people with disabilities who want to work and serve their communities get a shot at doing that.

In fact, increasing funding to these programs to speed up service would be beneficial to increase service satisfaction rates - which would likely lead to increased retention of consumers and increase employment outcomes.

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Position: Opponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: Yes

Organization: Summit Independent Living Center

Name: Robert S Kirwan Jr

Email: bobbykirwan1983@gmail.com

Phone: (406) 239-3304

City, State: Missoula, MT

Written Statement: Not enough money is being allocated to the department of public health and human services in the current version of HB 2.

Bill: HB-2: General Appropriations Act 2021-01-28 08:00 AM - (H) JAS on Health and Human Services

Position: Informational Witness

Representing an Entity/Another Person: No

Organization: N/A

Name: Emily Masar

Email: Montana.mountains@gmail.com

Phone: (406) 890-0408

City, State: Kalispell MT

Written Statement: I'm writing to encourage you to support funding for Independent Living Programs and the MT Telecommunications Access Program. These programs are incredibly important to people with disabilities in Montana, as well as to their families. People with disabilities can make all kinds of important contributions to their communities, and we must ensure that they have the tools and skill sets needed to reach their potential. Programs like these are crucial for enabling people with disabilities to become active community members, and these Montanans deserve every opportunity to achieve success and control over their own lives. Please fund these programs so that Montanans with disabilities can continue to access them and the critical support that they offer.

Thank you.

Emily Masar

Kalispell, MT

Bill: HB-2: General Appropriations Act 2021-01-28 08:00 AM - (H) JAS on Health and Human Services

Position: Proponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: No

Organization: N/A

Name: Robert Jaquiss

Email: rjaquiss@earthlink.net

Phone: (541) 971-3296

City, State: Missoula

Written Statement: TESTIMONY SUPPORTING THE FUNDING OF VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS AT THEIR CURRENT LEVEL

Robert Jaquiss

Vocational rehabilitation is an absolute necessity for Montanans who are disabled. Without rehabilitation, Montanans who are disabled will be doomed to lives of poverty and will as a consequence consume scarce taxpayer dollars in the form of public assistance.

My life is an example of the benefits of receiving vocational rehabilitation. I grew up in Oregon, and after graduating from high school in 1971, I received assistance from the Oregon Commission for the Blind. In 1976, I graduated from Oregon State University with a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science. I subsequently worked over twenty-eight years full time and was a taxpaying citizen. I continue to work, co-owning a consulting business.

Without vocational rehabilitation, I would have consumed far more tax dollars than were spent to assist me.

Maintaining at their current funding levels the services of: Vocational rehabilitation for youth and working age adults, Pre-employment Transition Services for high school students, training in Orientation and Mobility and other alternative techniques and tools of the blind, independent living services for the older blind, Montana Business Enterprise Program, and NFB Newslines are essential for the well being of disabled Montanans.

Bill: HB-2: General Appropriations Act 2021-01-28 08:00 AM - (H) JAS on Health and Human Services

Position: Proponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: Yes

Organization: National Federation of the Blind of Montana

Name: Joy Breslauer

Email: breslauerj@gmail.com

Phone: (406) 454-3096

City, State: Great Falls, MT

Written Statement: Mr. Chairman and members of the committee:

My name is Joy Breslauer. I am the first vice President of the National Federation of the Blind of Montana, as well as an individual with a lifelong disability, blindness. I am writing to urge the passing of HB 38, to preserve the current funding for the Disability Employment and Transitions Department. Cuts to this funding will severely impact the availability of programs and services to the blind and other people with disabilities, services that not only impact the quality of their lives but, in some cases, their ability to live at all.

This funding sustains such programs as vocational rehabilitation for youth and working age adults, pre-employment transition services for high school students, training in orientation and mobility and other alternative techniques and tools for the blind, independent living services for people with disabilities and the older blind, the Montana Business Enterprise Program and, formerly, NFB Newslines. These programs are not just nice to have or optional; they are essential to those of us who need them. Because we are a unique population with unique needs, the access to training, rehabilitation, and other services we need in order to be successful is not available anywhere else.

I graduated fifth in my class of 579 students in public school, I attended college, I am a wife, mother, grandmother, homeowner, tax payer, and a retired worker after 43 years. statistically, the employment or underemployment rate for the blind is over 70%. If I had not enjoyed the benefits of the programs and services provided by Disability Employment and Transitions, I might have spent my life living with my parents or living on Social Security. My life was incredibly enriched by having access to these programs; I strongly urge you to pass HB 38. Our very lives depend on it.