

St. Patrick Hospital
Medical Staff Services
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August 20, 2013

Honorable Bruce Tutvedt, SD 3
Chair, Economic Affairs Interim Committee
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Chair Tutvedt and Committee Members:

At its meeting today, the Executive Committee of the Medical Staff of St. Patrick Hospital voiced its concerns over the proposal that the physician health program be moved in-house by the Department of Labor and Industry.

The members agreed that separation between the physician health program and the Board of Medical Examiners is essential to guarantee confidentiality and not be suggestive of mandatory discipline. This confidentiality acts as an incentive for physicians to contact the physician health program before their illnesses become impairing.

The Montana Professional Assistance Program (MPAP) is a highly regarded, effective program with the expertise and influence needed to successfully navigate the preservation of patient safety while, at the same time, providing fair, constructive assistance for practitioners in recovery. MPAP has demonstrated favorable outcomes resulting in practitioners' successful returns to practice, while maintaining a high level of confidentiality.

The Executive Committee strongly urges you to re-evaluate this proposal and, instead, to offer increased and ongoing support to the current program which we believe is an invaluable and decisive resource to the Montana practitioners it serves, as well as their communities.

Sincerely,

Timothy P. Donovan, MD
President of the Medical Staff
St. Patrick Hospital