



Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee

PO BOX 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706
(406) 444-3064
FAX (406) 444-3036

60th Montana Legislature

SENATE MEMBERS

CAROL JUNEAU
RICK LAIBLE
TERRY MURPHY
DAN WEINBERG

HOUSE MEMBERS

EDITH CLARK
ERNIE DUTTON
TERESA HENRY
DIANE SANDS

COMMITTEE STAFF

SUE O'CONNELL, Lead Staff
LISA JACKSON, Staff Attorney
FONG HOM, Secretary

June 27, 2007

Dear Chairman Bergren and members of the Legislative Council,

At its June 26 meeting, the Children, Families, Health and Human Services Interim Committee discussed the House Bill 2 appropriation for a mental health study. Our discussion included a review of the options presented to the Legislative Council in the document entitled "\$200,000 Appropriation for Interim Study of Mental Health: Legislative Council Decision Points."

At the conclusion of our discussion, the CFHHS committee adopted a two-part motion to request that the Legislative Council:

- adopt Option A as presented in that document, to develop a Request for Proposals and contract for a full-blown "outside" study, and
- assign oversight responsibility for the study to the Children, Families, Health and Human Services Interim Committee.

In discussing the proposed options for the appropriation, the CFHHS committee expressed support for a study conducted by an outside consultant, rather than an in-house use of the funds for existing study and interim activities. The committee felt an outside study could bring a fresh and independent perspective to the long-standing issues Montana's mental health system has experienced in a number of areas, including adequate funding for services and a decline in the number of mental health providers available in both urban and rural areas to meet the need for services. The committee believes that hiring a consultant with an understanding of federal funding sources could allow the state to reap many times the \$200,000 appropriated for the study, by providing the Legislature with ideas on how to better leverage federal funds to support the state's mental health needs. In addition, an outside study could help pinpoint inefficiencies within our system and suggest ways to create a more cohesive and integrated mental health system.

For those reasons, I would respectfully ask the Legislative Council to approve the use of the \$200,000 for an outside study that would be assigned to the CFHHS Committee.

Sincerely,

Rep. Edith Clark, Presiding Officer

CI0425 7183soxa.