ECONOMIC AFFAIRS IC
August 23, 2011
Exhibit 13

Montana Dental Association

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Dear Committee Members:

I'm Dr. Rob Neill, President of the Montana Dental Association. I've practiced dentistry in Butte since 1979. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the review of the Board of Dentistry.

The Board of Dentistry has been an effective way to protect the health of Montanans. Without the Board there would be chaos. Anyone could advertise to treat oral diseases, even though they had little, or even no training.

You could have a situation where the public would not be protected and could be harmed. Anyone could be giving anesthetic injections, doing dental surgical procedures on hard and soft tissue, and possibly prescribing medications.

The Board of Dentistry ensures that individuals who will be treating Montanans have had the necessary training and have successfully graduated from an accredited school, be it dental, hygiene, denturist, or assisting. The Board makes certain that the individual has successfully passed appropriate written and clinical examinations in their particular field. The Board also ensures these professionals take continuing education courses to stay current.

It is important to keep all dental personnel under one Board.
The current Board of Dentistry handles all issues related to dental personnel. It works well. The Board consists of dentists, hygienists, a denturist and public members. It is a good idea to keep all issues related to the mouth or oral cavity area under one board.

Members of the public are often confused by and don't recognize the differences between dental personnel. Should someone have a complaint, it is simpler and more efficient for them to deal with one entity.

Regulation of dental treatment and other oral health services is very technical. The issues that come before the Board need a dentist's expertise. A large part of what the Board takes care of is the actual investigation of issues that only a dentist would have the background, education, and knowledge to address. This requires a lot of time for the dentists on the Board. It would be helpful if there were more dentists on the Board to help carry that load.

Dentists have the highest level of education of those licensed by the Board. Dentists typically have a minimum of 4 years of undergraduate education with a degree, and 4 more years of postgraduate-dental education where they earn their doctorate. This may be followed by two or more years of specialty training. Their broad, science-based knowledge and scope of treatment overlays all the services provided by others licensed by this Board. It falls to the dentists more than others on the Board, to manage cases and see the "Big Picture".

Both the scope of practice and education of dental hygienists and denturists is limited in nature and the overall care of the patient almost always requires input of a dentist's education and clinical abilities.

The public members, of course, need to be assisted in their understanding of dental issues that come before the Board.

It would seem wise to maintain one Board of Dentistry. Having one board where all matters dealing with dental health can be heard and dealt with is more likely to protect the public, whether it involves hygienists, denturists or dentists.

I understand the attempt to sunset unnecessary regulatory boards, however, dentists, denturists, and hygienists all deal intimately with the public, and can potentially cause serious harm. There needs to be strict regulation of anyone who deals directly with individual patients.

By having a unified Board, it will guarantee that only those who have the education, skills, and ethics to practice safely are allowed to do so.

Therefore the Montana Dental Association opposes eliminating or fragmenting the Dental Board. We do suggest adding more dentists to the Board to help with the work load.

Thanks for considering my comments. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to call or e-mail.

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