



## Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee

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### 65th Montana Legislature

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ALEXIS SANDRU, Staff Attorney  
FONG HOM, Secretary

April 13, 2018

Elsie Arntzen, State Superintendent  
Montana Office of Public Instruction  
P.O. Box 202501  
Helena, MT 59620-2501

Dear Superintendent Arntzen,

The 2017 Legislature approved House Joint Resolution 20, for an interim study of transparency in health care pricing. The study was assigned to the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee, which agreed to have a 15-member subcommittee of legislators and stakeholders review the topic and make recommendations on how to provide consumers with clear information on the costs of the health care services they receive.

Among other things, the subcommittee discussed both the complexity of the medical billing process and the wide range of costs that consumers could experience, depending on the type of health insurance coverage they have and the network of providers who are covered by their insurance policies.

The subcommittee members agreed that a need exists for consumers to be well informed about the many factors that influence the costs of their health care services. Members received information showing that individuals with low health literacy have annual health care costs of \$13,000, compared with \$3,000 for people with high health literacy levels. Many adults also have trouble understanding basic health information such as vaccination charts or prescription labels.

The subcommittee members discussed the various avenues that could be used to help consumers improve their health literacy, including better explanations from health insurers and health care providers, more information from employers, and basic education on these topics through the schools.

Because the Office of Public Instruction supervises and works so closely with Montana's public schools, the members thought your office might be able to provide the Children and Families Committee with information on the best way to improve the health literacy of Montanans, particularly Montana students who will be faced in the near future with making choices that could significantly affect both their physical and financial health when it comes to selecting and using health insurance and health care services.

The subcommittee recommended that the Children and Families Committee consult with your office for suggestions on how to best improve the health literacy of high school students. The full committee accepted that recommendation.

I'm writing on behalf of the committee to convey the request and to let you know that we would appreciate any suggestions your office would be able to offer.

Thanks in advance for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Sen. Mary Caferro  
Presiding Officer

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