

Testimony for  
Children Families Health and Human Services Interim Committee  
August 6, 2018

Madam Chairman, Members of the Committee, my name is Robert Tallon. I am the Executive Director of Reach, Inc. in Bozeman, MT. I have come here today to testify regarding the restoration of the 2.99% provider rate cut. I want to talk about one specific part of the budget cut, the change in funding for Individual Goods and Services, Nursing Services, Homemaker Services, Transportation Other, and Mileage Reimbursement. These expenses are medically required services provided by a third-party who is then reimbursed by the provider. The provider then bills the State for reimbursement. This activity affects 37 of our clients here at Reach and totals \$121,500 or 4% of our budget. In order to save additional General Fund during the budget cutting process, the State of Montana eliminated the administrative fee for these five services.

When General Funds were used, we were able to charge up to a 15% administrative fee for managing these funds. This includes collecting invoices, recording invoices, writing checks, accounting for the checks and invoicing the State of Montana for reimbursement. Now, without General Fund money, we are not allowed to charge any administrative fee and are processing over 600 transactions per year. I would like to propose that the State of Montana go back to funding administrative fees for these four lines of service under General Fund and allow a modified reimbursement rate for providers. Specifically I recommend a 15% fee for all checks under \$130 and checks of \$130 or more would be charged a flat rate of \$20 per check. This would hold fees lower than the State of Montana has seen in the past and is a much more reasonable

reimbursement rate than currently allowed for Acumen, the fiscal intermediary service for the State of Montana. If providers aren't allowed to charge a fee and our clients must go to Acumen, most of them will lose significant amounts of service dollars.

For example, Sam has \$2900 in Individual Goods and Services in order to buy medical supplies and to maintain his specialized wheelchair. If he has to turn to Acumen and they write three checks per month, the service fees will be \$1494 the first year, or over half of the total that he has in this category. The fee schedule I am proposing would cost \$322.

This may seem like a small sliver of the overall picture, but it is an issue that affects every provider in Montana who has these lines of service and many, many clients. It's unreasonable to ask providers to take on these numbers of transactions for no reimbursement and it's irresponsible to reduce services in exchange for high administrative fees.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Dear Committee Members:

I am the mother of a 20-year-old nonverbal man with severe autism. He is physically aggressive and requires 1:1, and sometimes 1:2 staffing 24/7. He is currently in an MDSC group home in Missoula. We are inexpressibly grateful for his placement, his team, and the cost plan that makes it possible.

I write to say, first, that the impact of the cuts on my own son's services has primarily been the increase of his Medicaid case manager's caseload from 30 clients to over 60. This severely impacts her ability to look out for her clients, particularly those with no families who rely solely on her to ensure they are safe and cared for.

Second, it is heart-breaking that Helena Industries had to close due to the cuts. I assume that is not fixable with the influx of revenue, but I want to note it here. It's a sickening loss.

Third, the problem that plagues my son's services continues to be difficulty hiring/retaining staff. MDSC has had 40-52 unfilled openings for the 15 months my son has been in their care. They closed two homes last year, unable to staff them; this is a serious loss, since MDSC is the in-state agency that works with the more challenged, dually-diagnosed folks that AWARE, Opportunity, and other agencies won't take on (something I know too well from personal experience). Approving a raise for direct care staff, not funding that raise, then taking away hours and wages is making a bad situation worse.

Finally, Montana fails to provide a higher level of care for people dually diagnosed with developmental disabilities + behavioral/aggression issues. While the state currently will pay \$685/day for out-of-state behavioral treatment for 21 and under when the issue is forced (*achieved only through political and public pressure and inhumane treatment of families*), in the case of a behavioral crisis the only option for my adult son would be Warm Springs - an overcrowded, locked facility with untrained staff, plagued with staffing issues and allegations of neglect and abuse.

Whether the current influx of revenue can address any of these issues, I do not know. But I want you to know the problems stated above are real, and the people they affect are IMPORTANT and precious. They are Montanans, deserving of compassionate, trained caregivers, meaningful work, and safety.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely, Shawna Hanson  
Gus' Mama  
406 549 0136  
celtics@bresnan.net

August 1, 2018

## Recommendations for "Restoration" of funding cuts

### Developmental Disability Program

- DD 0208 Waiver
  - Eliminating the decrease to return to FY17 rates is a step in the right direction.
  - Make the restoration retroactive to the date the rate decreases took effect.

### Community First Choice

- Eliminate the decrease of 2.99% return to FY17 rates
  - Eliminate the CFC hour reductions (numbers are maximum allowed):
  - Eliminate the Meal Preparation reduction of up to 2 hours per week (from 7 to 5 hours per week)
  - Eliminate the Exercise reduction of hours down from 5 hours to 3.5 hours per week
  - Eliminate the IADL (grocery shopping, lite housekeeping, community integration) reduction from 5 hours per week to 3 hours per week

### Big Sky Waiver

- Eliminate the decrease of 2.99% return to FY17 rates
  - Eliminate the reduction of Social Personal Assistance Program limited to 10 hours per week (i.e. we have some individuals with a total of 52 hours per week)
  - Eliminate the reduction of the 25 mile limit on transportation

### Vocational Rehabilitation

These programs allow ORI to help people find and maintain long term meaningful employment while helping employers to solve staffing issues.

- Eliminate the Vocational Rehabilitation hourly rate cut of 20% and Pre-ETS services to High School students the hourly rate cut of 45%.
- Eliminate the 25% rate cut to the Extended Employment Program that provides long term supports to people with disabilities to maintain employment

**Joshua M. Kendrick**

CEO



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To: 2018 Children and Families Legislative Committee

Sue O'Connell [soconnell@mt.gov](mailto:soconnell@mt.gov)

Dear Committee Member:

We ask for DPHHS to please restore the approved Direct Care Increase as outlined in HB638-Section 1 for a \$.75 an hour per direct care employee increase in hourly wage to be given 2 times in this fiscal year (July 1, 2018 and January 1, 2019).

This wage increase is desperately needed in order for DD Providers to compete in attracting quality workers for Direct Care positions that have remained vacant due to a critically tight job market in Montana. This staff shortage has resulted in our 44 year-old daughter, who has lived in Missoula's MDSC group homes since 1991, to now be showing regression in her communication and social interaction skills due to her inability to participate in community outings for training purposes by trained, experienced direct care workers. Our DD community-based individuals have been dealt a major reduction in their quality of life and the on-going maintenance and training of their various skill levels that now may take years to recover, if ever. The DD world depends on a consistency and maintenance of trained, Direct Care workers who are the key to a productive, successful program providing respect and opportunity to our DD population here in Montana.

Thank you for your time and effort during this period of critical recovery.

Sincerely,

Ande and Paul Odegaard

5077 Eastside Hwy

Stevensville, MT 59870 Phone(406)777-3389

July 30, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

I am unable to attend the meeting on 8/6/2018 to put my input in to where funds being made available should go and was told I could send an email so that is what I am doing. As a single Mother of TWO Adult Children with Autism from Havre, the effects of the budgets cuts over the last few months have affected my family negatively. First my family was on SNAP and back in March on the day when I should have received my funds, nothing showed up in my account. I waited a couple days as things happen then attempted to call which at this point, you can no longer talk to anyone and have to leave a message/call back number. After a few more days and a couple more messages left, I sent an email and was told to go to my local office. That Monday morning I went and the person there was NOT going to help me until I showed her my email. After she did some digging, she discovered that I no longer qualified for SNAP! This was the middle of March about 10+ days after my funds should have been deposited. I had sent in my mini re-certification info the middle of January and was never contact or received another piece of mail concerning my recertification. I was shocked that the funds just stopped with NO prior notice this was going to happen. Many people rely on SNAP to feed their families....even more than I did and to have it just taken away without any notice because of the offices that were closed across the state which meant fewer employees getting the job done in a timely fashion is not right. People who need help the most are paying the price for lack of staffing and what staffing there is, is overwhelmed!

My Son was with Opportunity Resources for just a few months when we found out they were closing their offices because of budget cuts. We were left in limbo for many months not knowing if, when, or who would be providing Case Management for him. We knew it would not be someone from Havre that would know us, know our community and what there is and isn't for him. We knew whoever would be taking over his Case Management would be difficult to get a hold of and would not be readily available to us and his needs since they could be from anywhere in the State of Montana. Well we finally got a letter from the State saying someone would be in contact with us. Then a few weeks later we get a letter from AWARE out of Great Falls stating they/she was our new Case Manager and would get a hold of us to meet. Well we had an issue come up concerning the certification of my Son with Adult SSI from child SSI and when I called the person on the letter I received, could only leave a message and still to this day with many messages left, no return call. I still as of today after many, many weeks have not spoken to I guess our new Case Manager. Because of the four organizations that had to close because of the budget cuts and so many people that have lost their jobs, I am not sure we will ever have a Case Manager that is accessible and in our communities like in Havre like we used to. Having someone who is not available or knows our community hurts my Son and his future. Services are next to nothing when it comes to Adults with needs already and to have things taken away and made even more difficult is not right. Luckily I for now and hopefully for many years am able to take care of him (and my daughter) and their needs but if something was to happen, I have no one reliable I can contact, no one to help set up care in our home, etc. The thought that Adults with needs may have to be put into a home/institution because of the lack of services and funding because of budget cuts is extremely scary and keeps me awake at night!

No family, no person should have to go thru this. Our State's most vulnerable continue to pay the price and because of all that was lost, it will take years to build that back up again plus it shows us that our most needy are dispensable to the State of Montana!

I really hope that funding can be spread out among all the services that got cut. They are all needed to someone in Montana and the cuts have affected so many. I am not sure how you choose one over another. I just wanted to share my story and what I have gone thru and how these cuts have affected my family and still do to this day! Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Andrea Melle  
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Havre, MT 59501