EXHIBIT 2
DATE 2/19/07
HB 645

To: House Judiciary
From: WEEL – Olivia Riutta – oriutta@weelempowers.org, 406.495.0497.
Date: February 19, 2007
Re: House Bill 645 – Blood Testing for Certain Newborns

Madame Chairwoman and members of the committee.

I am here today as a representative of WEEL. We are a state based non-profit organization that provides direct advocacy to low-income Montanans. We are membership based and we are here today standing in opposition to HB 645 because it has serious consequences for low-income women. I oppose this bill for three reasons.

1. This bill promotes discrimination:
   - The language of the bill is written so that if any physician or blood relative of the baby could pursue the necessary search warrant to test the baby for drugs or alcohol
   - In Montana over 40% of births are paid for my Medicaid. I am afraid that low-income mothers will be singled out because society stereotypes them as bad parents
   - I also fear that Native American and other minority babies face racial and ethnic discrimination
   - Women will not seek prenatal care or deliver in a hospital for fear of prosecution

2. This bill doesn't support families:
   - It is not in the best interest of a family unit to have one or both of the parents incarcerated
   - Fines are also unwise because economic punishment of the parent would adversely affect the child that we are supposedly protecting
   - I have to believe that the vast majority of parents do the best job they can. We as a state, should not be enacting policies that support children suing their parents.

3. The bill will not create the intended result: fewer babies born to mothers who use drugs or alcohol.
   - Alcohol and drug use are addictions – they are diseases that need treatment – and cannot be controlled by threat of incarceration and fines. If this line of thinking were to be true, nobody would do illegal drugs by the nature of them being illegal.
   - If we want to have fewer babies born of parents using drugs and alcohol, then we must invest in programs that work toward that goal such as the MIAMI program
     - The Montana Initiative for the Abatement of Mortality in Infants Program works to create fewer low birth weight babies through reducing maternal and fetal risk factors, including: STDs, smoking, use of alcohol or other drugs during pregnancy, battering or other forms of abuse, homelessness, low-income or lack of insurance, no familial support, and age of mother.
     - MIAMI performs these functions through targeted case management: Service coordination for access to a variety of services including: medical, nutritional, and social services throughout the client's pregnancy.

I urge you to support Montana's babies and families and vote no on HB 645. I do urge you to continue on with the original intent of the bill and support programs such as MIAMI that take a holistic approach to healthy pregnancies.

Thanks,

Olivia Riutta