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PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY
Exhibit No. 2
Date 3-14-07
Bill No. HB 118

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR

JOAN MILES
DIRECTOR

STATE OF MONTANA

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DPHHS Testimony on HB 118 for Allowing the Dispensing of Contraceptives by a Registered Nurse employed by a Family Planning Clinic Under Contract with the Department of Public Health and Human Services; and amending Sections 37-2-104, 37-7-103, and 50-31-307, MCA

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am Jo Ann Dotson, a nurse at the state health department and chief of the Family and Community Health Bureau. We provide services and programs for infants, children, women and their families. We presently oversee and administer the Title X Family Planning Program for the State of Montana.

On behalf of the Department of Public Health and Human Services, I encourage you to pass HB 118. Each year, nearly half of the pregnancies in Montana are unintended. For many women, an unintended pregnancy is a difficult, even life-altering experience. It often occurs when a woman is too young to be a parent or is unmarried, too soon after a previous birth or after she has achieved her desired family size. The Department of Public Health and Human Services recognizes that unintended pregnancy also has public health consequences. Women who experience such pregnancies are less likely to obtain timely prenatal care and the chances of adverse health outcomes increases for both mother and baby.

Having access to a broad choice of contraceptive methods is vitally important to a women's successful practice of contraception. A broad choice helps them select a method that best fits their life and has the fewest side effects. In turn, this should increase their chance of using the method correctly, consistently and successfully in avoiding an unplanned pregnancy.

For these reasons, it is very important that registered nurses in Title X family planning clinics be allowed to dispense all of the currently available factory pre-packaged contraceptives. We contract for Title X reproductive health services at 29 sites, providing services to approximately 28,000 individuals per year.

Approval of HB 118 will allow Title X clinics to continue to provide essential contraceptive services to women in Montana, eliminate barriers to receiving services and improve health outcomes of mothers and babies.