SENATE JUDICIARY
EXHIBIT NO. 1
DATE 1/19/09
BILL NO. SB 197

Senate Bill 197

Sponsored by: Jesse Laslovich
Requested by: The Montana Court Reporters Association

Chairman Perry and Members of the Committee:

My name is Stephanie Morrow.

I stood before this committee in 2005 as President of the Montana Court Reporters Association. At that time my, name was Stephanie Ahrens. I worked for Judge John S. Henson, Judge of the Fourth Judicial District in Missoula.

Today I stand before you as Stephanie Morrow. I currently work for Judge Robert L. Deschamps, III, Judge of the Fourth Judicial District. I am a single mom, residing in Missoula.

Court reporters across this state provide unparalleled service, due to their skill, knowledge, devotion, and ethics. I am proud of my profession and the service I provide to the citizens of the State of Montana.

The courts and citizens of Montana enjoy the same access to services as the courts and citizens in the major metropolitan areas of our country. Those services would not be possible without the court reporters of this state paying for the equipment necessary to provide such services.

My skills and technologically advanced equipment allow me to preserve an accurate record and create an instantaneous voice-to-text translation for my judge to read in real time. I have also used my skills and equipment to assist a hearing impaired defendant in "hearing" the proceedings by having him read from my computer screen, the realtime translation of the court proceedings.

Due to my knowledge of and dedication to my profession, I have given lectures on testifying and court presentation. In July of 2007, I was honored with an invitation to lecture for the Montana Highway Patrol at the Montana Law Enforcement Academy.

The cost of my continuing education and the technological equipment I use is paid for by me, with transcript income. These items are costly. And, I am grateful for transcript income so I can provide these services (through my continued education) to our citizens and the other professionals in the legal community.

The net amount of money I initially invested into my profession in terms of equipment is approximately $10,000. My laptop needs to be replaced about every 3 or 4 years, which can cost as much as $1800. Maintenance, support agreements, printer supplies, membership dues, and continuing education expenses cost well over $1000 per year. There are also numerous costs related to proofreading, office supplies, shipping, et cetera. Court reporting is an expensive profession, and these items are paid for by me with the transcript income I earn.

For each hour of court testimony, on average, I spend approximately 3 to 4 hours in producing a transcript. A 16-hour trial will take me approximately 48 to 64 hours of production time. When

a transcript is ordered, those transcription hours are in addition to a 40-hour work week. I am not paid overtime for this service. Rather, transcript income is intended to not only compensate me for the expense of my equipment but also my "overtime" work.

As a single mom, the extra hours it takes to produce a transcript takes away from the quality time I have with my six-year-old boy. As such, it is very important to me that I am, in fact, compensated for that overtime.

I sincerely thank the Committee for its consideration and urge it to pass Senate Bill 197.

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