EXHIBIT 5
DATE 1/22/09
HB

Disability Services

EXHIBIT 5
DATE 1-29-09
HB 2

Madaam Chair, ~~members~~ of the committee, for the record

Ladies and Gentlemen good morning and thank you for this time you have given me. My name is Al Bartos and I am a proud parent of a special needs young man.

The Governor of our great State has used the phrase "Last Best Place" numerous times during his term. As a Montana native I was looking forward to the day I retired from the military and moved my family back home. I soon found out the phrase "Last Best Place" definitely did not refer to how we help and support our special need children, young adults and adults. After moving back home and researching, talking to numerous individuals and organizations I have realized and came to the conclusion this state more or less wants nothing to do with funding for our special need individuals.

I am here today to hopefully open people's eyes and hearts to what is really happening in the real world, and as a parent of a special needs son I do feel that I am qualified to talk about this.

Funding is the key issue here, and it needs to start at an early age to help families. The State has stated that special need High School children our allowed to stay in school until the age of 21 or basically six years of High School. They then put it in the school districts hands to say yea or nay. After talking with a High School principal I have found out that after four years they are no longer funded for this person so you can guess what the answer is when parents ask for extra years, no funding no school. This is wrong, the norm for special need children should be six years in High School if the parents ask for it and the children require it. Not allowing these young adults to have these extra years of school is robbing them from a good education.

Now lets look at what is offered once they do graduate. They have nothing offered by the State but to have their name put on a waiting list, this is absolutely and undeniably UNACCEPTABLE. Whatever the heads of these departments are doing, no matter how honorable, beneficial, constructive, gainful, or worthy, it should only be secondary to the effort and planning that needs to be, and must be, targeted to those individuals on the waiting lists.

Most children coming out of high school face the world from a different perspective. To most await opportunities untold. Now then let's look

#5

momentarily to those who have just walked equally as proud across that auditorium platform to receive their diploma and nothing awaits them.

A parent picks up a phone one day and on the other end is a Case Manager who explains to them that there are no immediate services available, and that their child will be added to a waiting list. To call this devastating news would be an understatement. This is America; the land of hopes and dreams, where a black man can become our President, the land where no child gets left behind and neither should any adult child who has a disability.

To the families where both parents work, having an adult child at home with a disability with nowhere to go is now a paramount concern of far reaching proportions. To most of these families this means one of them will have to quick working to help take care of their child. Our children are our future and it's time to fix this problem, and it can be fixed. We need reform in the respective agencies, to appropriate and budget the money necessary to expand services in such a way to include each and every adult person with a disability a future that includes the services they require to live a complete and happy life.

I have numerous letters from other agencies regarding costs to work at Flathead Industries, price to ride Eagle Transit, letter from parents, letter from Opportunity Resources and also a letter from a High School principal. I would like all these to be placed on record, and again I would like to thank you for your time.

Al L. Bartos

Al L. Bartos

EXHIBIT 5
DATE 1/22/09
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"Creating Opportunities for People with Disabilities"

FLATHEAD INDUSTRIES

66 4th Avenue W.N.
P.O. Box 1916
Kalispell, MT 59903-1916

Phone (406) 755-7656
Fax (406) 756-7787
www.flatheadindustries.org

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  Job Placement
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  Badges, Rags, Mailings
- **Supported Living**
  Independence
  Ownership, Pride
- **Group Home Living**
  Family Environment
  Individualized Service
- **Recreation**
  Enhance Health
  Build Confidence

January 7, 2009

Mr. Al Bartos
1105 Columbia Drive
Columbia Falls, MT 59912

Dear Mr. Bartos:

I am responding to your inquiry as to what Flathead Industries' fees are relative to work services/day program. I am providing you with a per day rate, given Kyle comes two days per week . If Kyle's needs dictated a one to one staff/client ratio, the charge would be $120.00 per day. A one to two staff/client ratio would have a charge of $60.00 per day per client.

We believe the two day per week transition from school to a work program highly benefits the student/client. Expectations differ in a school setting from that of a work setting, as well as the work setting has larger numbers of people. This can be very nerve racking to individuals and behavioral issues can occur if they are "thrown in" on a four to five day basis. I applaud your foresight in having Kyle transition in slowly.

Should you require any additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Vickie L. Poynter,
CEO

EXHIBIT 5
DATE 1/22/09
HB

December 22, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

My daughter is 4 years old and has Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) Type 1. It is a terminal neuromuscular disease that renders her unable to lift her head, swallow, crawl, and walk. It also impairs her respiratory function. When she was diagnosed we were told she would most likely not see her first birthday. I am sure you can imagine the emotions associated with learning of such a devastating and debilitating condition.

The neurologist that we first met with encouraged us to contact the CDC, which turned out to be one of the best pieces of advice we received. They walked us through all the paperwork associated with Medicaid, helped find therapists, bought supplies and equipment and provided the support that is so necessary for a parent going through such a trying time. Even though it has been almost four years since that diagnosis, the CDC continues to provide those things and is instrumental in why my child is still here and doing so well. If we hadn't had the support of the organization and it's caseworkers I shudder to think what the outcome would have been. Needless to say, the CDC is a very important aspect in the ongoing care and well-being of my child.

As a parent in this situation having someone else to help shoulder the burden is essential. My efforts can therefore be spent ensuring that my daughter remains happy, healthy, and alive. So when my daughter's caseworker informs me that the state is changing the way the budget is done or respite is compromised, for example, it does not help alleviate the stress felt in any way whatsoever. Not only does it make her caseworker look like he/she doesn't know what is going on, it creates doubts about the agency as a whole and adds to the stress factor of all of us parents who are trying our best to care for our children. Unless you have walked in our shoes you have no idea what the implications of your arbitrary decisions are, so I implore you to make your decisions based on empathy for our situation and not on cost.

The CDC is critical to many children in this state and the policies handed down need to reflect that fact.

Sincerely,

Debby St. Onge
Swan Lake, Montana

EXHIBIT 5
DATE 1/22/09
HB

To:Al Bartos
From: Peter Pelchen, Case Manager,
Opportunity Resources in Kalispell Montana
Re: State Legislature

The single most important issue for the DDP should be addressing the waiting list. The fact that kids with disabilities are graduating from our high schools and have nothing offered by the State but to have their name put on a waiting list is absolutely and undeniably UNACCEPTABLE. Whatever the heads of these departments are doing, no matter how honorable, beneficial, constructive, gainful, or worthy, it should only be secondary to the effort and planning that needs to be, and must be, targeted to those individuals on the waiting lists.

Most children coming out of high school face the world from a different perspective. To most await opportunities untold. They face life with all its wonder as well as its depravity, with challenge, the energy of their youth, and the knowledge they have acquired over the past twelve years of education. Some will decide to move on to higher academia, maybe a local college or University with aspirations of becoming lawyers, doctors or teachers. For others it might look like acquiring technical skill training with visions of becoming a computer programmer, a medical assistant, or an electrician.

Now then, let's look momentarily to those who have just walked equally as proud across that auditorium platform to receive their diploma, and maybe for some this was done with adaptive equipment like a wheelchair but nonetheless was accomplished with no less "sweat equity" than any other but their future doesn't look quite as bright. You see, over the past twelve years of elementary and secondary education, for these the course work at school included attending a resource room and learning a special, modified curriculum that may have included the assistance of a Parra Professional or Aid to assist that individual for reasons that could include: having cognitive delay or mental retardation, a traumatic brain injury, Epilepsy, Autism, a physical disability, and so. Did they get an honest education? You bet they did and a damn good one too! This is the no-child-left-behind era but we're here to talk about what follows that ceremonial stride across the stage in cap-and-gown.

A parent picks up a phone one day and on the other end is a Case Manager who explains that your son or daughter may be eligible for services offered to adults in Montana who have a disability. At first it sounds like there's a carrot coming..."didn't she say "services," ...a program, ...a class , ...job training or other vocational options, you can barely wait to learn more as you sense your grip on the phone increasing and your heart rate rising. Then, in a more subdued and sobering tone you are told honestly and forthrightly that there are no immediate services available. Following the eligibility process [and you receive a formal letter stating such] your son or daughter's name will be added to a waiting list. To call this devastating news would be an understatement. We are talking about young men and women, individuals who through no cause or fault of their own, were born with a disability, some discrepancy in their DNA that ultimately translates to being less equipped to face the world than the rest of us and we tell them to WAIT. This is America! The land of hopes and dreams, where a black man can become our President, the land where no child gets left behind and neither should any adult child who has a disability.

What a typical day looks like thereafter for these individuals is as wide and long as the list of names. In a home where both parents work, having an adult child at home with a disability with no where to go is now a paramount concern of far reaching proportions. For the adult child, valuable lessons learned in school, skills, be they academic or vocational begin to fade and fizzle away because there is no outlet for honing them. Some take to the street where they quickly learn how another part of our society wiles away the hours and temptations present to dabble with drugs, alcohol, or petty crimes like stealing. Often, we don't hear what trials are faced daily and the impact this has on a family because they choose to face the future with optimism and aren't the kind to complain. This doesn't make the problem any less than what it is. Our children are our future and it's time to fix this problem . . . and it can be fixed. We need reform in the respective agencies, to appropriate and budget the money necessary to expand services in such a way to include each and every adult person with a disability a future that includes the services they require to live a complete and happy life.

EXHIBIT 5
DATE 1/22/09
HB

Eagle Transit
160 Kelly Road
Kalispell, Montana 59901
406-758-5728

January 7, 2009

Mr. Al Bartos
1105 Columbia Drive
Columbia Falls, MT 59912

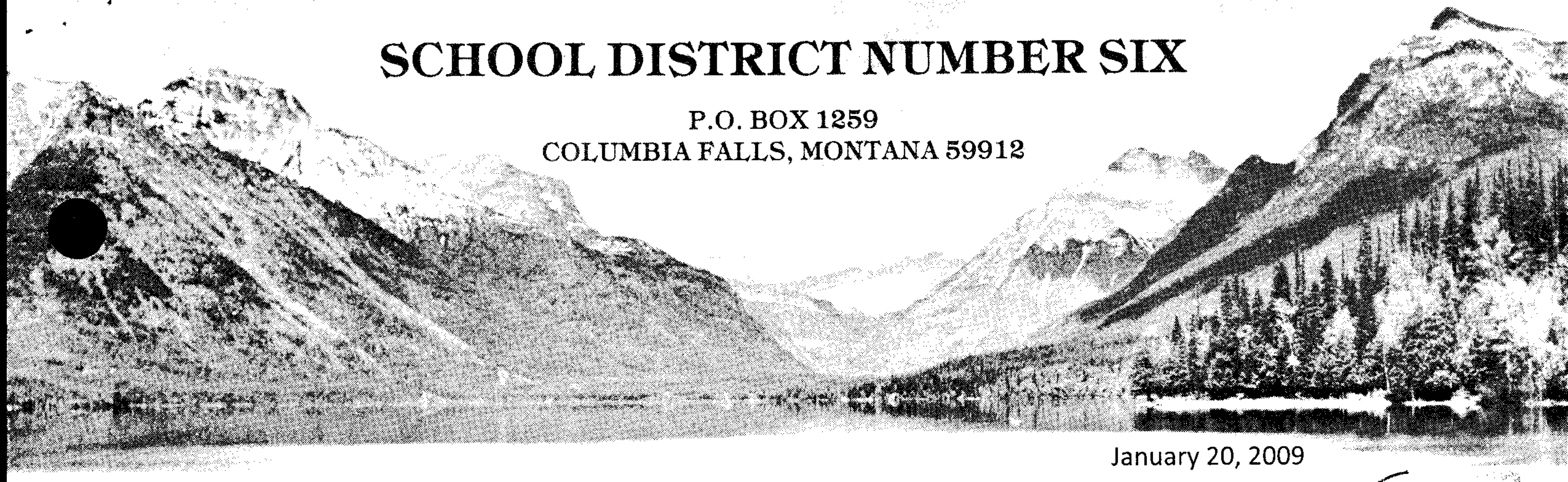
Dear Mr. Bartos:

I am writing you to respond to your request for information in regards to cost of transporting your son Kyle and his co-worker Sean to and from Flathead Industries. The daily cost has worked out to be $12.00. It is fortunate that your son and Sean are able to catch the Columbia Falls Commuter to Kalispell in the morning for $1.00. The afternoon bus is a special "Dial-a-Ride" service costing $11.00.

Eagle Transit is happy to assist you and your family with your public transportation needs. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

David Polansky
Program Manager
758-2427



SCHOOL DISTRICT NUMBER SIX

P.O. BOX 1259
COLUMBIA FALLS, MONTANA 59912

January 20, 2009

EXHIBIT 5
DATE 1/22/09

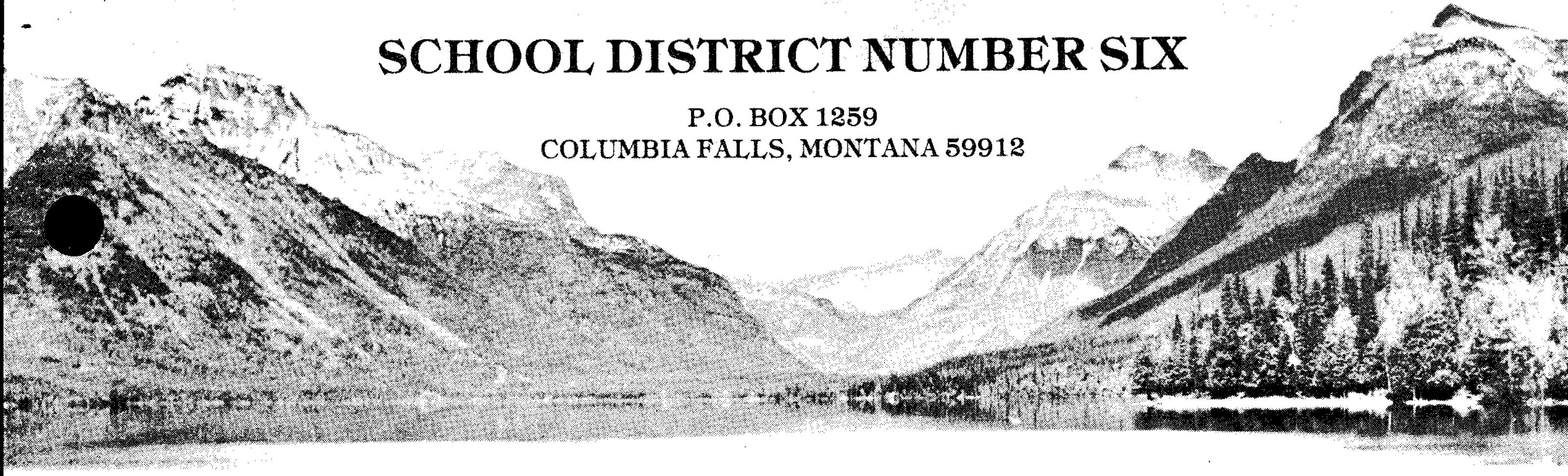
Dear Montana Legislative Members:

I am writing this letter as a support to Al Bartos as he presents his vision to you regarding the need to provide transitional services to Special Education students in Montana. I have been working in education in Montana since 1994 and during this time I taught Mathematics (11 years) and have worked as a high school principal (4 years). I am currently the principal at Columbia Falls High School. During my fifteen years in education, I have been fortunate to work with many outstanding Special Education teachers and been involved in developing transition programs for high need students.

Special Education students offer unique challenges as we work to address their needs and to provide a hope for their future. The challenges in our school system are both financial and educational, as we develop goals that are challenging but achievable and then funding the needs presented by these goals. Within our Special Education population we have students that integrate well with the general population and then students that require significant amount of individualized assistance. We carefully prioritize the utilization of resources and strive to assist all students in reaching their goals. Funding becomes even more of a challenge when a student being served has been retained or he/she is in need of additional schooling to meet the IEP goals. Federal law allows for students to be served in the Special Education until they reach the age of 21, however; the funding we receive to provide services is limited if a student turns 19 years old on or before September 10 of the funding year.

The students that exceed the age limitation for funding are frequently students that have high needs and require additional personnel, equipment, and support services. The personnel needs frequently require the use of a one-on-one aid which at a beginning salary adds $22,000 to the budget. It is difficult to put a fixed cost on additional equipment needs and other support due to the individualized nature of meeting each students needs. Any State level support through per ANB funding or other means would assist us greatly in meeting the needs of these students and to transition them into their life after high school.

Along with the development of transition skills within the high school, I also want to express my support for transition programs such as Flathead Industries. It has been rewarding to watch Al's son Kyle as he develops confidence, independence, and skills through his placement at Flathead Industries. I believe this is a partnership that we all need to support with resources and finances. The partnership has been an excellent learning opportunity for all parties involved and has been a great benefit for the students. It provides schools a concrete target for skill development and most importantly, it provides students and parents with hope for their future.



SCHOOL DISTRICT NUMBER SIX

P.O. BOX 1259
COLUMBIA FALLS, MONTANA 59912

As you look at the funding needs set before you this legislative session, please consider additional funding for our Special Education students. It is my hope that Special Education students are funded for all years they are in high school and also that Montana invests in programs and partnerships that serve individuals with learning disabilities after high school. Please take the time to visit schools and adult programs to experience the joy in providing meaningful opportunities for these individuals.

Sincerely,

Alan Robbins

Alan Robbins, Principal
Columbia Fall High School