

	MT	Laurel	Matt Gilg	Self	03/09/2026 11:25 AM
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Subject: Laurel Prison

Comment: Dan Villa today compared the HB5 forensic mental health facility to a children's hospital. This is a material misrepresentation that must be corrected in the official record.

This facility will house individuals found not guilty by reason of insanity or incompetent to stand trial for criminal offenses. It is a secure, locked forensic facility – not a pediatric medical center. These are categorically different institutions with different populations, different security requirements, and different community impacts.

The proposed site is 459 yards from West Elementary School. The Laurel School Board formally voted to oppose this facility on January 27, 2026. Characterizing a locked forensic facility as comparable to a children's hospital, while siting it adjacent to an elementary school without community input, is not an oversight – it is a deliberate misrepresentation designed to minimize legitimate public safety concerns.

-Matt Gilg, Laurel MT resident | gilgm12@gmail.com

	MT	Billings	Dena Hete	Self	03/09/2026 04:14 PM
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Subject: Testimony

Comment: -

Attachments:

 [VIEW ATTACHMENT 1](#)

CHS Interim Committee Public Comment

3/9/26

Good afternoon Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Dena Hete, H-E-T-E. I have lived in Montana for a total of 26 years. I originally came here from Tunkhannock Pennsylvania to attend Rocky Mountain College in 1990 and received a political science [degree](#). In 1994 I moved to Phoenix Arizona in 1996. I also received an associate's degree in paralegal studies and work for a former prosecuting attorney. I came back to Montana in 2009 and lived in Helena. I moved back to Billings, where I currently reside and I've been in Billings for the last 8 years now.

Today I am speaking as a grandmother who is deeply concerned about the health and development of my 4½-year-old grandson.

His mother, my daughter-in-law, used high-potency marijuana concentrates, commonly called dabs, throughout her pregnancy and continues to use them while breastfeeding. My grandson is a happy and well-fed child, but he is showing concerning developmental delays. At his age, he is unable to form full sentences and it is very difficult to understand what he is trying to say. He has a few simple words but cannot clearly communicate his needs. His mother often has to speak for him.

I have another grandson who is three months older, and the difference in speech and development is very noticeable.

My grandson is entering kindergarten in the fall, but he cannot yet put sentences together. He is also beginning to show signs of aggression.

I expressed my concerns to his mother and suggested he be evaluated for speech delays. She became defensive and verbally abusive and has since blocked full contact with me. It has been 8 months now that I have seen my grandson . I am absolutely devastated by this. She does not believe in taking her son to a pediatrician and has refused vaccinations. She has two other children who currently receive IEP services at school.

Because of my concerns, I began researching the effects of high-potency THC concentrates during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Dabs are highly concentrated cannabis products that can contain 75 percent THC or more. They are typically smoked in vape pens or through devices like bongs.

From what I have learned, THC is fat-soluble and can accumulate in breast milk. This means a child can continue to be exposed to concentrated THC through breastfeeding.

My daughter-in-law also smokes these products in the home around the children, exposing them to secondhand smoke.

I was so concerned that I contacted Child Protective Services to request a wellness check. I referenced the law passed last year regarding child endangerment and marijuana exposure, but I was told that marijuana is legal and there was nothing they could do. I called multiple times and even spoke with a supervisor in Gallatin County, where they reside. My counselor and law enforcement also reported concerns, and still nothing was done.

What I am seeing in my own family is a growing misunderstanding in our communities. Many people believe marijuana products are safe simply because they are legal. Some believe these products are similar to the marijuana people used decades ago, but the potency today is very different.

I also know of families allowing minors to use marijuana in their homes because they believe it is harmless.

My concern is that Montana is not doing enough to educate parents, mothers, and families about the risks of high-potency marijuana products during pregnancy, breastfeeding, and early childhood development.

If we are going to allow these products in our state, we need better education, better data, and better protections for children.

Thank you for your time and for listening.

Dena Hete, 3/9/26

	MT	Laurel	Shawna Hopper	Self	03/10/2026 08:04 AM
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Subject: Myths VS Facts

Attachments:

Comment: Hello, I for some reason am not able to find today's meeting to join virtually and I have been trying to hit the participation button instead of just submit statements. But today's meeting has mysteriously disappeared.

 [VIEW ATTACHMENT 1](#)

Madam Chair, Committee Members, Dan Villa and Charlie Brereton

My name is Shawna Hopper, concerned and frustrated resident of Laurel.

I would like to commend Charlie and Dan for their Myths VS Facts slides yesterday. However, if they are really Myths why are they sitting in front of you explaining these things and continuing to ignore the communication requests from the city of Laurel residents and Laurel City Council. I would certainly think correcting the “myths” the residents of Laurel fear and will directly impact would certainly improve with the actual communication of the residents in the community it is being placed.

During Mr. Brereton’s slide at approximately 10:48 he is discussing the “myth” of relocating other facilities and in the same breath states, “large acreage that we don’t plan to use right now”. This indicates that there will be growth of additional facilities of any nature in the future.

Moving on to Mr. Villa’s slide and presentation I would like to address his statement at approximately 10:51 about his duties with the BOI and “following the law as a developer”. Although Mr. Villa may NOT be breaking the law it is certainly not ethical practice to break the protocol set forth by the state and the BOI for applications of the Montana State Criminal Forensic Facility or Behavior Health Facility, whichever it is called today. This is FACT not fiction or a myth; Laurel did NOT complete the application that other communities completed by the deadline. Laurel CAO Kurt Markegard only submitted a “letter of interest” after multiple messages from Mr. Villa which also included Mr. Villa offering to buy him beer if he submitted the letter today. This is fact as public records documents have been released. Law breaking maybe not but unethical and dishonest, absolutely.

During the slide and presentation, it was also discussed that there will be “no unsightly fencing or razor wires ONLY architectural permitters. Do these individuals have outdoor time? How will you ensure that an architectural perimeter is secure.

As for Mr. Villa’s comment about Laurel’s water and the community wanting a residential neighborhood over this facility; the FACT is we know Laurel CANNOT sustain growth of any sort. Our current water tower needs repairs and that cannot happen without a new tower and overhaul of our water and sewer system.

Additionally, I would like to discuss Mr. Villas lie, yes, I said LIE, during his slide about the press release and communication with Laurel CC.

“Myth” - Laurel CC learned of the State’s buy sell agreement from the press, not the BOI;

“Fact” - The CC was briefed during the public comment on January 20th, the first meeting after the Buy-Sell agreement was signed. **News outlets reported on the agreement later.**

Q2 broke the news of the buy sell agreement on January 19th so the press DID release the information prior to the public comment statement from Mr. Villa on January 20th to Laurel CC.

Lastly, I would like to thank you for meeting with me today, since that is what you call public comment. Public comment Statements on December 3, 2025, and January 20, 2026, do not constitute; “meetings with CC”, that you continue to state trying to place blame on others.

In conclusion, please quit ignoring our community and CC; if you want to set the record straight between your “myths vs facts”, the only way to do that is through communication. We as a community, Laurel C.A.R.E.D and Laurel City Council have sent emails requesting communication from both Mr. Villa, Mr. Brereton and Governor Gianforte in regard to his December 4th statement “We will not put it some place it isn’t wanted”. The ONLY communication is two public statements from you at a City Council Meeting where no discussion can be asked of you. Again, these public comment statements have both been AFTER the press released information; that is NOT transparency and communicative.

DO BETTER, REPRESENT MONTANA BETTER and be BETTER LEADERS.

Thank you,

Shawna Hopper