



# School Funding Interim Commission

69th Montana Legislature

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TO: School Funding Interim Commission (SFIC)  
FROM: Pad McCracken and Becca Brown, Commission Staff  
RE: Working Group Representation and Parent Advocacy Groups in Montana  
DATE: August 8, 2025

This memo is intended to remind members of the Commission about where things stand with representation for the Innovation and Excellence in Education Working Group (IEEWG), provide information about parent advocacy groups in Montana, and on behalf of Chairman Bedey and Vice-Chair Matthews, propose a path forward.

First, a refresher on what 5-20-301, MCA, (as amended by HB 153; emphasis added) requires of the Commission:

Under subsection (1)(d):

*... for the commission formed during the 2025-2026 interim, **prior to conducting the study under subsection (1)(a)**, form an innovation and excellence in education working group to develop recommendations, objectives, and an implementation plan as described in subsection (10) to improve the basic system of free, quality, public elementary and secondary schools.*

(This is why we have been referring to the IEEWG's work as "Phase I" of the Commission's work.)

Under subsection (10)(a):

*The innovation and excellence in education working group is composed of the commission and others as determined by the commission. The commission **shall include representation** from teachers, school administrators, school trustees, and parent advocacy groups in forming the working group.*

At the Commission's June 23, 2025, Zoom meeting, during discussion of [a memo on the IEEWG](#), the Commission considered the following motion (as recorded in the [minutes log](#)):

*Motion 13:34:21 Tom Burnett moved to invite a parent advocacy group member to work with the commission and rely only on commission members to represent teachers, administrators, business officers, and trustees.*

There was discussion on the motion, then a roll call vote with the motion passing 13-7. Following subsequent public comment, Chair Bedey asked staff to compile a list of “parent advocacy groups” for the Commission’s reference and consideration.

It was not clear from the June 23 meeting how the Commission intended to select a parent advocacy group and member of that group to work with the Commission. It was also not clear the number of parent advocacy groups that exist in Montana. The not-necessarily-comprehensive list included in this memo has 10 groups with various constituencies.

The Commission could proceed by selecting a parent advocacy group and asking that group to name an individual to join the working group, resulting in an IEEWG of 21 members, the 20-member Commission +1. Parent advocacy groups not selected and other stakeholder groups named in the statute might perceive that they are unrepresented.

The Commission communicated at its initial meeting a desire to robustly seek input from stakeholders throughout the IEEWG effort by incorporating outreach “roadshows”, participating in the October educator conferences, and including opportunities for meaningful public comment at meetings.

An alternative to naming one individual from one parent advocacy group to formally have a “seat at the table” would be to name no additional members and instead rigorously encourage all the stakeholder groups to provide input through various means to ensure their “representation” and a “voice at the table”. In addition to the already envisioned outreach efforts, this could include solicitation of written input, compiled, summarized, and presented to the Commission by the contracted IEEWG facilitator. Targeted input could be solicited at the outset, and again as the Commission develops its IEEWG recommendations and implementation plan.

This approach would satisfy the Commission’s duty to “include representation” from the various stakeholder groups without incurring the cost of compensating additional member(s).

The following pages contains a list of **Parent Advocacy Groups** in Montana. This list was compiled at the direction of Chairman Bedey at the June 23, 2025, Commission meeting. The list should not be viewed as absolutely comprehensive. If Commission members are aware of other groups, please let us know by emailing Commission staff.

## **Parent Advocacy Groups**

Please note that group descriptions or mission statements have been copied from each organization's website or social media.

### **Family Connections Montana**

<https://familyconnectionsmt.org/>

**Mission:** Family Connections utilizes the strength of community to support exceptional early childhood experiences.

**Vision:** We believe every child deserves a successful future!

Family Connections serves 23 counties in north central & north eastern MT: Glacier, Toole, Liberty, Pondera, Teton, Chouteau, Cascade, Judith Basin, Fergus, Petroleum, Hill, Blaine, Phillips, Valley, Daniels, Sheridan, Roosevelt, Garfield, McCone, Richland, Dawson, Prairie and Wibaux.

**Approximate Membership:** Unknown – 3.4k Facebook followers

### **Kids Education Yes (KEY)**

<https://kidseducationyes.com/>

Kids' Education Yes! (KEY) is a non-partisan Political Action Committee (PAC) founded by community members in Great Falls, Montana in the mid-1990's. The city of Great Falls is known for its strong educational system. Committed, to continuing the legacy of support for education.

**Approximate Membership:** Unknown – 1.9k Facebook followers

### **Montana Advocates for Children (MAC)**

<https://www.mtadvocatesforchildren.org/>

All Montana families and children should have access to a robust and coordinated early care and education system.

Montana Advocates for Children (MAC) is a group of early childhood stakeholders committed to ensuring all Montanans have access to a robust and coordinated early childcare and education system.

**Approximate Membership:** Unknown – 340 Facebook followers

### **Montana Association for the Education of Young Children (MTAEYC)**

<https://mtaeyc.org/>

**Mission:** The mission of the Montana Association for the Education of Young Children is to promote a community of professionals advocating for quality care and education of young children through collaboration.

The Montana Association for the Education of Young Children (mtaeyc) is an organization of early childhood professionals working to solve local, state, and national issues that affect children and families.

**Approximate Membership:** Unknown – 424 Facebook followers

### **Montana Association of Gifted and Talented Education (AGATE)**

<https://www.mtagate.org/>

The purpose of the Montana AGATE (Association for Gifted and Talented Education) is to support an understanding of all gifted children and their exceptional needs, and to advocate for appropriate education through partnerships with educators, parents, administrators, legislators, and the general public. It is our **mission** that all children develop their full potential.

**Approximate Membership:** Unknown – 617 Facebook followers

### **Montana Empowerment Center (MEC)**

<https://mtempowermentcenter.org/>

**Mission:** The mission of the MEC is to empower, encourage and educate all Montana families with children and young adults with disabilities.

**Vision:** We envision that individuals and families with children and young adults with disabilities will have the information, resources and support they need to make informed and empowered choices.

**Approximate Membership:** Unknown – 1.8k Facebook followers

### **Montana Family Rights Alliance**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1731686000316432/>

This group was initially formed to come together as parents and sports fans to stand up against the elected and appointed bureaucrats that had essentially used Covid as an excuse to block families from attending the events of their kids and grandkids. Along the way, we came to the realization that this was just the tip of the iceberg, and the rights of parents and families are being systematically taken away. The time has come to push back and let the bureaucrats know that they can't trample on our rights as citizens!

The Montana Family Alliance has evolved into a powerful group, with a very loud voice! We have been encouraged to build on the momentum by our members. Thus, we have initiated the process of forming the Montana Family Alliance as a legal entity, that will engage in fighting for our members, their rights, and future generations. Ultimately, they awoke a sleeping giant, and had no idea how formidable we can be when they mess with FAMILY!

**Approximate Membership:** Unknown – 9.3k Facebook group members

### **Montanans Organized For Education (MOFE)**

<https://www.mofeactionfund.org/>

MOFE Action Fund is committed to standing up for public education, opposing school privatization, and fighting out-of-state and in-state special interests that want to sell off our schools and abandon rural Montana.

When Montanans Organized for Education was founded in the fall of 2019, our goal was to protect public education by advocating for necessary funding and services and fighting those who would funnel our scarce public resources to unaccountable, for-profit institutions. Unfortunately, it became obvious in the fall of 2021 and early 2022 that we would need to do much more to push back on the extremist groups that were working to undermine confidence in our public schools. Therefore, we started a Political Action Group to support pro-education candidates first for school board trustee positions and then for the state legislature.

**Approximate Membership:** Unknown – 602 Facebook followers

### **Montana Parent Teacher Association (MPTA)**

<https://www.montanapta.org/>

**Mission Statement:** We empower communities to work together for children and families through education, leadership, communication, and advocacy.

**Vision Statement:** Montanans working together for the future well-being of all children.

**Approximate Membership:** Unknown – 483 Facebook followers

### **Zero to Five Montana**

<https://zerotofive.org/for-policymakers/>

**Mission:** To work for our children, for our future.

**Vision:** A Montana dedicated to every child.

Zero to Five Montana is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to stabilize, build, and innovate the early childhood system in Montana so all families and communities can thrive.

**Approximate Membership:** Unknown – 1.6k Facebook followers

### **Montana Parent Voice – An Initiative of Zero to Five Montana**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/montanaparentvoice/>

Montana Parent Voice is a statewide parent advocacy network dedicated solely to increasing awareness related to critical early childhood issues in Montana. It is a place for families to come together, learn, and take action for the early childhood system we all want to see for our children.

**Approximate Membership:** Unknown – 171 Facebook group members, 297 Instagram followers