

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR



JOHN BOHLINGER
LT. GOVERNOR

September 20, 2006

Mike Ferriter
Director
Department of Corrections
1539 11th Ave.
P.O. Box 201301
Helena, MT 59620-1301

RECEIVED
SEP 22 2006
LEGISLATIVE AUDIT DIV.

RE: Billings Assessment and Sanction Center Program

Dear Director Ferriter:

The Department of Corrections has submitted a plan pursuant to § 2-8-302, MCA to privatize the Billings Assessment and Sanction Center Program (BASC). BASC is a 30-bed correctional program for adult female offenders who have been sentenced to the Department of Corrections. The Department currently operates the program inside the Montana Women's Prison in Billings, and proposed hiring Alternatives, Inc. of Billings, a private, nonprofit corporation, to operate the program at a nearby facility in conjunction with its female prerelease center and drug treatment programs in Billings.

The Legislative Audit Committee (LAC) reviewed the Department's proposal and held a public hearing on it on June 20, 2006.

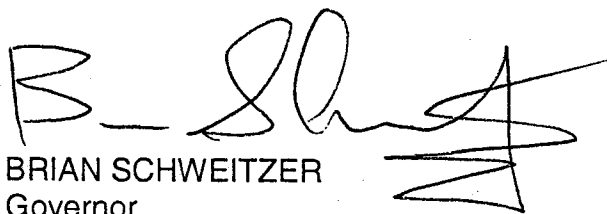
I approve the Department's privatization plan. I make this decision for the following reasons:

- One of this administration's guiding principles for corrections is an emphasis on community programs. Community programs are essential and more effective than prison in restoring offenders to lives in society as productive, law-abiding citizens. The goal of the BASC program is to keep women offenders out of prison by assessing women committed to the Department and seeking community placements for them. The BASC program fits this principle by removing the operation and its female offenders from within the overcrowded prison and placing it in the community as a true community corrections program. Alternatives, Inc. already operates successful community corrections programs and is poised to operate the BASC program outside the prison walls.
- This privatized program will not displace any state workers. All existing employees of the women's prison who work in the BASC program will remain employed at the prison.

- The program will not result in any significant increase or decrease in costs to taxpayers. With this privatized program outside the walls of the prison, the prison will be able to utilize the free space for women who have been sentenced to prison but are in expensive county jail beds awaiting transfer to the prison.

Because the private non-profit program promotes community corrections alternatives to prison for offenders without displacing any state workers or costing more money, I believe the change in the program is in the best interest of the State of Montana, its citizens and offenders. The Department of Corrections may proceed to move the Billings Assessment and Sanction Center from the Montana Women's Prison.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Schweitzer", with a stylized flourish at the end.

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
Governor

cc: Scott Seacat, Legislative Auditor
Legislative Audit Committee