



A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY OF WAYS TO REDUCE CHILDHOOD HEALTH TRAUMA AND ITS LONG-TERM EFFECT ON CHILDREN.

WHEREAS, Montana's future depends in large part on the health, growth, and achievement of the state's children; and

WHEREAS, many physical, mental, and educational disabilities are preventable through prenatal care, parent education, family support, and other efforts to prevent or mitigate childhood trauma; and

WHEREAS, the human brain grows to 85% of its adult size by the time a child is 3 years of age, and this growth is profoundly shaped by the child's experiences during those years, particularly by the safety, stability, and nurturing provided by the child's primary care givers; and

WHEREAS, repeated childhood trauma, including chronic neglect, may cause significant physical changes to the brains and nervous systems of children that profoundly affect both their physical health and mental health as adults; and

WHEREAS, childhood traumatic stress can be either acute stress, such as community violence, serious accidents, the loss or sudden death of family members and friends, removal from the home, and physical or sexual assault, or it can be chronic stress, such as neglect, physical and emotional abuse, and domestic violence; and

WHEREAS, children who receive safe, stable, nurturing care generally reach appropriate developmental milestones, form secure attachments and satisfying social relationships, and develop effective coping skills and the resiliency to recover from traumatic events; and

WHEREAS, acute or chronic childhood trauma may prevent or reduce resiliency; and

WHEREAS, unaddressed childhood trauma may affect a child's experiences later in life and may lead to problems such as poor physical health, addiction, and mental illness; and

WHEREAS, nurses visit high-risk pregnant women in their homes as part of the Montana Initiative for the Abatement of Mortality in Infants, a program designed to provide the women with information they can use to

improve their own health and thus the health outcomes of their newborns; and

WHEREAS, the national Nurse-Family Partnership program for low-income, first-time parents and their children has been shown to reduce traumatic events, reduce child abuse and neglect, and reduce adolescent arrests by 60% and adjudications by 90% later in the child's life; and

WHEREAS, programs that teach biological and foster parents skills for responding to traumatized children have been shown to reverse some of the symptoms of trauma in young children and to improve resiliency; and

WHEREAS, the National Native Children's Trauma Center has been working with the Institute for Educational Research to create trauma mitigation demonstration projects in schools serving the Blackfeet, Rocky Boy's, Fort Peck, Crow, Northern Cheyenne, and Flathead Reservations and Missoula county public schools in low-income neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, the projects have trained more than 1,000 Montana clinicians and educators to recognize and respond to symptoms of trauma and have helped schools develop short-term cognitive behavioral intervention programs that help to build long-term family and peer support for children, in an effort to increase resiliency and reduce the effects of trauma.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, to study promising and evidence-based practices for the prevention of childhood trauma and for mitigating its effects on children.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the study efforts include:

- (1) compiling data on the prevalence of acute and chronic childhood traumatic stress;
- (2) evaluating the extent and impact of current efforts in Montana to prevent childhood trauma and to mitigate its effects after it occurs;
- (3) identifying promising and evidence-based practices that are most appropriate for Montana communities, particularly rural communities;
- (4) identifying the communities most in need of prevention and mitigation efforts related to childhood trauma as a way to prevent physical and mental health problems, substance abuse and addiction, school failure,

and involvement in the criminal justice system; and

(5) identifying any appropriate steps Montana policymakers may take to reduce childhood trauma in order to improve the mental health of Montanans.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the study include representatives of the Department of Public Health and Human Services, the Office of Public Instruction, the mental health service area authorities and local advisory councils, groups involved in efforts to prevent childhood trauma, the Indian Health Service, Montana Indian tribes, and other interested parties as identified by the committee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2012.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions, comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 63rd Legislature.

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