

[Date]

The Honorable [Full Name]

[Office Address]

[City], [State] [ZIP]

Dear [Representative/Senator] [Last Name]:

Congratulations on your election to the [your state] [Senate or House].

The Gallatin County Mental Health Advisory Council (MHLAC) is a non-partisan group composed of community representatives across the system of care and mental health consumers. The MHLAC was called for by the 1999 Montana State Legislature to increase local public participation and awareness of mental health issues and care. The local advisory council is a coalition of community members interested in assessing, planning and strengthening public mental health services in our community.

We wish to thank the legislature for its previous efforts, including House Bill 130-132 and the 7-hour presumptive law. Thanks to these efforts, we have made significant gains in community mental health services in Gallatin County over the past five years.

- Gallatin Mental Health Center (GMHC) has significantly expanded its capacity and programs in the past several years and is now serving approximately 1,600 people from Gallatin, Park and Madison Counties, of which 65-75% have serious mental illness.
- Gallatin County Emergency detentions have decreased 46% from FY2011-FY2012. We had no emergency detentions to Montana State Hospital in Warm Springs, improving the quality of patient care and reducing costs.
- Crisis mental health evaluations decreased 34% in the same period.
- Police dropped off 53 people directly to our local mental health crisis center in the past year, a 14% increase from the previous year.
- Importantly, the majority of crisis evaluations now occur at GMHC rather than the hospital or jail. This both improves the quality of patient mental health care and decreases costs. In addition, a small inpatient facility prevents people from being having to be transported to the state mental hospital.
- Gallatin County was identified by the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) as a community that has been successful in providing treatment in lieu of incarceration for people with serious mental illness, and was one of only four sites in the country to receive the assistance of the Bazelon Center to identify

systemic changes that could be made to further decrease the contact of citizens with serious mental illness with the law and justice system. Our priorities for this legislative session are informed by this analysis.

We wish to invite you to our December meeting from 12:00-1:00 on Monday, December 2 for a luncheon in your honor. During this meeting, we wish to celebrate our successes, discuss our legislative priorities for this session, and share how mental illness and substance disorder conditions affect the people in our community. We sincerely hope you can join us, and we will follow-up on your availability.

Should you need MHLAC as a resource as you represent our district, please feel free to contact our administrator Glenda Howze by telephone (____) ____-____ or email: _____.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Name]

[Organizational Title]