

Steve Meloy, Director  
Montana Board of Public Education  
PO Box 200601  
Helena, MT 59620-0601

VIA FAX 406-444-0847

**RE: Proposed Distance Learning Rule**

Dear Mr. Meloy:

I am concerned that the proposed rule on distance learning, which requires courses to be taught by a teacher certified by the State of Montana, will have a negative impact on the dual credit program the Chamber has worked so hard promote with School District 5 and the Flathead Valley Community College. A rule that permits an instructor credentialed to teach at the higher education level to also instruct high school students, when it is in their field of expertise, is more beneficial to students and learning. I urge you to reconsider the language of this proposed rule and entertain new language that permits improved flexibility, more opportunity for learning, and makes full use of K-16 partnerships.

The Kalispell Chamber of Commerce has worked hard to promote a seamless local educational system with our school district and our community college. We are now in the second year of our *Business Education Initiative*. This past year six advisory teams comprised of 60 business leaders were formed and worked with educators in the career cluster structure planned for implementation in our high school system, and to 1) evaluate curricular offerings, 2) propose recommendations for curricular adjustments, and 3) propose future curricular offerings. This coming year we will work to identify opportunities for student career experiences. We have a vital interest in helping prepare students to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

The economic environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is rapidly changing. New technologies emerge constantly, bringing with them the demand for new skills, and our educational system needs to keep up with the rapid pace of change. Montana needs to experiment more with new approaches to help schools and students improve academic performance. Early enrollment in college-level courses for credit, student career experiences, and distance learning are some of the innovative approaches that can improve performance and provide the skills needed to thrive in the workplace today and in the future.

Sincerely,

Joe Unterreiner, President  
Kalispell Chamber of Commerce